

FAME AND FORTUNE

STORIES OF BOYS WEEKLY. WHO MAKE MONEY.

BOB BRANDON, CONTRACTOR; OR, THE TREASURE THAT LED TO FAME.

By A SELF-MADE MAN.
AND OTHER STORIES



A rush of chattering boys and girls toward the fallen tree attracted Bob's attention from the astonishing discovery he and Will had just made. He turned and beckoned them forward. "Come and see the sight of your lives," he cried.

FAME AND FORTUNE WEEKLY

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Bob Brandon, Contractor

OR, THE TREASURE THAT LED TO FAME

By A SELF-MADE MAN.

CHAPTER I.—Bob Brandon and His Friend Will.

"It's a fine thing to be rich, Will," said Bob Brandon reflectively, as he sat on a stool peeling a pan full of potatoes.

"Bet your life it is," replied Will Godfrey, who sat on another stool opposite him shelling a number of quarts of peas.

"You can't do anything in this world without money," said Bob.

"Not a blamed thing," agreed Will.

"That's why we're nothing but a pair of slaves—you and me."

"We aren't much better. We have to hustle from daylight till dark."

"For a measley three fifty per week."

"And our board and lodging."

"Fine board and lodging. An old shake-down in the garret and what's left after the boarders have eaten up everything in sight. It's a wonder we've got any flesh on our bones."

"Oh, we're pretty healthy yet. The doctors say that people eat too much," grinned Will.

"No danger of us eating too much. You like peas for dinner, don't you?"

"I could eat a quart of 'em," replied Will, licking his chops and looking longingly at the mess he was shelling.

"Do you expect to get any to-day?"

"I hope so."

"It'll be a hope deferred, I'm thinking. When the boarders get a crack at those peas the dish will look like a tree struck by lightning."

"There's more than four quarts here. There ought to be some left."

"Mrs. Atkins and her husband will see that none are wasted. They like peas themselves."

"Then where do we come in?" asked Will, with a blank look.

"I'm surprised to hear you ask such a question after our three weeks' experience here as boys of all work at the Woodbine Cottage."

"We were chumps to take the job."

"Oh, I don't know. We were a pair of wanderers, down on our luck, with nary a roof to cover us, nor a square meal in sight. Any port in a storm, you know."

"I s'pose we can leave any time we want to? We've got ten dollars and a half coming to us so far, besides this week."

"Yes, it's coming to us, and it will continue to be coming to us if we dust out in the middle of the season. We were hired with the understanding that we were to stay as long as the boarders did. If we left before then we were not to get any money."

"Oh, lor'! It was you who made that agreement."

"And you agreed to it."

"We were fools."

"Oh, I don't know. We might have been worse off if we hadn't stopped."

"Not much. We could have gone to work on some farm."

"Where we'd have had to hustle all day long in the hot sun at less than we are getting here. We have a little time to ourselves in the afternoon. Yesterday I drove some of the boarders over to the lake and I made a dollar."

"What! A whole dollar?" exclaimed Will, enviously. "What did they give you the money for?"

"When we got to the lake they wanted to go to Cedar Island. I told them it would cost a dollar to hire a boat. They consulted and then ante-ed up the price."

"How did you make the dollar, then?"

"I went around to Jerry Long's cottage and borrowed his boat from Lucy."

"Geel! you were smart."

"That's business. I'm out for all I can make. I rowed them over—it was worth a dollar to do that—pointed out the site where the new summer hotel is to be next year, and fetched them back. Then I returned the boat and drove them back here in time for supper."

"You had a snap. I had to work like a trooper most of the afternoon, doing chores, and helping Kittie and the missus get supper," said Will.

"The boarders want me to take them to the village this afternoon. They have taken a fancy to me. I guess I'll be on the job as Mr. Atkins's leg is out of business."

"It ought to be my turn to take 'em," grumbled Will. "It ain't fair for you to have all the snaps that's going."

"You'd better ask Mrs. Atkins to let you take them, then."

"I see myself doing it. The old griffin would sit on my neck."

"She might, for she's a tartar."

At that moment the lady in question suddenly appeared at the kitchen door near which Bob and Will were seated.

"Ain't you got them peas shelled yet?" she asked, glowering at Will.

"Most done, ma'am," replied the boy, getting on a big hustle.

"How about them 'taters, Bob Brandon?" she asked in a milder tone, for she was more partial to Bob than to Will, though she didn't waste any kindness on him.

"They're coming, ma'am," answered Bob.

Mrs. Atkins disappeared, and presently the boys heard her jawing the hired girl.

"Kittie has a hard time of it," said Bob.

"I should say so. She's jawed at from morning till night. That's what we friendless orphans are up against. People wipe their feet on us because we haven't any friends. You never said whether you were an orphan, too, Bob."

"No, I'm not. My mother is dead but my father is alive," returned Bob, a cloud coming over his good-looking face.

"Where is your father?" asked Will, curiously.

"He's in S——," replied Bob, in a gloomy tone.

"Didn't you and he pull well together?"

"Oh, yes. We always got along first rate."

"Then how is it he didn't get you something decent to do and keep you from going off on a tramp?"

"Because it was out of his power to do anything for me."

"What does he do for a living himself?"

"He works for the State," said Bob, after a momentary hesitation.

"Got a political job, eh? Then I don't see why he couldn't get you something to do."

Bob made no reply.

There was a look of dejection in his face that showed the unpleasant nature of his thoughts.

That these thoughts were connected with his father there could be little doubt as the cloud had not come over his face until Will had begun questioning him about his only parent.

What the trouble was could only be surmised as Bob wasn't saying anything about it.

In a few minutes both the peas and the potatoes were ready for the kitchen and the boys carried them inside after dumping the skins and the pods in the swill barrel for the pigs to feed on later.

The boys were set at other work, Bob being dispatched to the barn to help Mr. Atkins, whose game leg bothered him a good deal.

Bob and the small farmer got on very well together.

Mr. Atkins was one of those men who are ruled by their wives.

His disposition was meek and non-assertive.

He had nothing to say in the management of the place, except in carrying out his wife's orders, and giving sundry directions himself, the same as a superintendent might for Mrs. Atkins was the boss of the coop.

She owned the property, and, in her opinion, she owned her husband, too, and treated him much the same as she might any other live chattel.

They had been married a good many years, and he had been sat upon so hard, that he had long since realized that he was a mere cipher in the internal economy of the establishment. Bob natural-

ly saw how the wind blew, and, as he didn't fancy the lady of the house much, he sympathized with Mr. Atkins. He was always ready to do anything he could to help him, and Mr. Atkins appreciated it, and was grateful to him. There were only ten acres of ground attached to the house, so the amount of farming done on the property didn't amount to a whole lot.

Mrs. Atkins made her money off summer boarders. She advertised accommodations for thirty, but twenty filled the house. Still, she had been known to stow twenty-eight away at a pinch. The season was only just beginning now, and she had but eight, though four more were expected on the following Saturday. Bob and Mr. Atkins were busily engaged doing some repairs to the light wagon when the dinner bell rang.

"I'll have to quit now, Mr. Atkins," said the boy, as it was his duty to wait on the table.

Mrs. Atkins had selected him for this service as he was a good-looking and polite boy. In her opinion, Bob added tone to her house, and she was pleased to see that the boy did his part in a highly satisfactory manner. Mr. Atkins nodded and Bob went directly to the little room in the garret where he and Will slept and put on his best suit. After washing his face and brushing his hair he presented a very neat and cheerful appearance, and when he appeared in the dining-room with a plate of bean soup in each hand the boarders all nodded pleasantly to him.

CHAPTER II.—Bob Is Treated to a Surprise.

"Say, Will, if I had a hundred dollars I know what I'd do," said Bob to his companion a few days later.

"What would you do?" asked Will, curiously.

"I'd take the contract for clearing away the trees on Cedar Island for the new summer hotel."

"How could you when Jerry Long has it?"

"Jerry will never put the job through when the time comes for him to tackle it."

"Why won't he?"

"Because he likes his booze too well. He couldn't get a hustle on to save his life. He'd rather loaf around the tavern than do an honest day's work."

"How did he come to get the contract, then?"

"Because he's an A1 woodchopper, and he happened to be sober and in the humor for work at the time bids were asked for. He put in the lowest and caught on."

"Suppose you could get the contract, how would you carry it out? You're not a woodchopper, and besides one man couldn't do the work."

"It wouldn't be necessary for me to do any chopping. I'd boss the work, and see that it was done right, and as quick as possible."

"Would a hundred dollars carry it through?"

"No; but it would get it started in good shape, and the payments that are to be made on account as the job progresses would see it through."

"Well, you're not likely to get it so what's the use of talking about it?"

"Don't be too sure of that. We'll have forty dollars apiece coming to us when we get through here. If you lend me your forty that would make eighty, and I might see my way to squeeze through with that."

"You might make a mess of the contract if you

did get it from Jerry and lose all the money. Then we would be in the soup again."

"Don't you worry about me losing the money."

"How much would you expect to make?"

"A couple of hundred dollars or so. I'd be willing to give you twenty dollars for the loan of your forty."

"How long to you think the job would take?"

"Six weeks or two months. I'd also pay you a dollar a day as a general helper, so by the time the work was finished and paid for you ought to be worth \$100."

"A hundred dollars! I'm with you. I never owned a quarter of that in all my life," said Will, with some eagerness.

The foregoing conversation took place on Sunday afternoon while the two boys were sitting at the back of the barn sunning themselves and taking things easy. Bob, who had made the acquaintance of Jerry Long and his daughter Lucy during the second week he had been at Woodbine Cottage, had learned about the contract her father had made with the syndicate that was going to put up the new hotel on Cedar Island in Clear Lake.

Lucy, to whom Bob had taken quite a liking, had told him that she was afraid her father wouldn't be able to put the contract through owing to his increasing thirst for liquor and dislike for work. After talking the matter over with the girl Bob had suggested that if he could raise enough money to get the work under way he would take the contract off her father's hands and give her a percentage of the profits. She gladly welcomed his suggestion for her father was under a \$100 bond to carry through the contract, and if he failed to do it he would not only lose the money there was in the job, but his friend, who had signed the bond, would have to pay over the \$100, and that was pretty sure to cause hard feelings between them.

As there would be between \$80 and \$90 coming to Bob and Will around the first of September, the former felt that if he could borrow Will's share he would be able to start the ball rolling in case Jerry Long was unable to take hold himself. So he brought the subject up that afternoon as a feeler to see if Will would be willing to loan him his money. In case Will showed a reluctance in falling in with his views he wanted to have time enough to look around and see if he could raise the amount he wanted in some other quarter. The \$20 bonus and promise of a dollar a day for his services captured his friend, as we have seen, so Bob felt satisfied that he would be able to tackle the contract in the event that Jerry failed to come to time.

At that moment a man, attired in an old and shabby suit of clothes, climbed over the fence near at hand that separated the yard from the corn field. He looked like a wreck, and his movements were slow and undecided. He stood for a few minutes looking around him, as if uncertain what to do next.

"Hello, who is this chap?" said Will. "I guess he must be a tramp who thinks he can stand this place up for a meal. If he gets anything out of the missus he'll be doing well. She'll probably call on us to bundle him out into the road."

"He looks like a man who is all in," replied Bob. "It would be a shame to turn him away."

The man saw the two boys and advanced toward them. As he drew near Bob started on his

feet with a flushed face and rapidly beating heart. The stranger's smoothly shaven features were familiar to his gaze.

"Great Scott! father," he exclaimed. "Is that you?"

The man stopped and stared at him in a bewildered manner.

"Bob!" he cried in a hoarse voice. "You here, my son?"

Their hands met in a close grip, and bending forward the forlorn looking intruder kissed Bob. Will viewed the performance with the greatest amazement. He could not possibly fathom the meaning of it. Indeed it was so astonishing that it took his breath away.

"Father, what does this mean?" cried Bob, in anxious suspense.

"It means, my son, that I and several others have escaped from the prison where I was sent."

"Escaped!"

"Escaped," repeated his father. "I have been traveling all night ever since I gave my companions the slip in the darkness, and skulking across the fields and through the woods since sunrise in momentary fear of being recaptured and taken back to finish the long term that to an innocent man is something worse than death. I did not expect to find you here, my boy, but I thank heaven for this meeting, for I thought it might be years before I could have the joy of seeing you once more—of clasping your hands in mine."

"Oh, father, to think that we should meet thus," said Bob, with great emotion. "You look worn out and exhausted. You must be hungry as well as footsore."

"Yes, I am hungry, my son. I have tasted nothing since I partook of the meager prison supper last night," replied the man, wearily.

"You must not be seen, father," said Bob, anxiously. "Come into the barn, where you will be safe for a time at least. I will get you food and drink, and then we will consider what is best to be done. Officers of the law are doubtless searching the country around about for you and the others who escaped with you. Some means must be taken to hide you until the hue and cry is over. If not found by the authorities you may be able to make your way to Canada and begin life again under an assumed name."

Bob pushed open the barn door and led his father inside. Then he thought of Will, who was staring at them with all his eyes.

"Will, come here," he said.

Pulling his friend inside and closing the door he said.

"This is my father."

"Your father!" ejaculated Will.

"Yes. Stay with him until I return."

Leaving them together Bob hurried across the yard to the house where he found Kittie Carson, the maid of all work, in the kitchen reading a paper. He and Kitty were the best of friends, and there was hardly anything the girl wouldn't do for him, for he had taken her part several times when abused by Mrs. Atkins.

"Kittie," cried Bob, "I want you to do me a great favor."

"I'll do it," she said, dropping her paper.

"Get me a jug of milk, some meat and bread, and a piece of pie. I want the food for a famished man. And, Kittie, don't say a word about it to any one."

"But Mrs. Atkins may notice that——"

"Never mind Mrs. Atkins. I'll take all the blame and see that you don't suffer for obliging me. Get me the food, quick! It is a case of great urgency."

Kittie saw that Bob was feverishly eager to get what he wanted, so she hastened to do as he asked.

She quickly buttered several slices of bread, put meat between them, and handed them to Bob.

Then she got a jug and filled it with milk.

Inside of ten minutes the boy was back at the barn with the provender.

"Here you are, father. Here's a good meal for you. Eat and say nothing more till you are through."

"Thank you, my dear boy. It will put new life in me, and give me courage to consider what I shall do next."

Thus speaking he fell to eating like the famished man he was.

CHAPTER III.—Harboring a Fugitive.

While his father was eating Bob drew Will aside, for he saw that he would be obliged to make some explanation of this remarkable state of affairs.

"I suppose you are astonished at what you have seen, Will," he said.

"Somewhat," replied his friend. "Your father seems to be in hard luck."

"He is. It's the hardest kind of luck. Now, Will, I'm going to trust you with the truth. My father has just escaped from the State prison."

"From the State prison!" gasped his friend.

"Yes. He was sentenced to six years for a crime he never committed."

"How did that happen?"

"I can't tell you now. I'll explain some other time. But you can take my word for it that he is an innocent man."

"How long has he been in prison?"

"Only a few months."

"When did he escape?"

"Last night, with several other men who were serving their time there. He hasn't had a chance to tell me the particulars yet."

"Does he expect to get clean off?"

"He hopes to, but it is very doubtful, for there is no doubt that word has been sent to the police of all the surrounding towns and villages to be on the lookout for the fugitives."

"You are going to hide him in the barn here?"

"Such is my intention, until after dark."

"And then he will take his chances along the road?"

"No; I intend to take him to the lake and across to Cedar Island. That's a good place for him to remain for a week or two until the hunt cools down."

"How will he live there?"

"I'll see that he gets food."

"I don't know how you're going to get it. Mrs. Atkins is so close with everything that she's bound to miss even a slice of bread. How did you get the stuff your father is eating?"

"Kittie gave it to me at my urgent request."

"The old dragon will miss it when she gets home and starts to get supper for the boarders,

then there'll be the dickens to pay. She's liable to beat Kittie."

"Not if I'm around she won't, and I expect to be. I shall take the blame myself."

"She'll demand an explanation."

"I'll give her one."

"Will you tell her that you took it for your father?"

"Not much. She mustn't learn that my father is on the premises."

"Mr. Atkins might come to the barn and see him."

"I shall hide him in the loft under the hay, where he can take a sleep till I'm ready to take him away. He hasn't slept a wink all night."

"Suppose one of the village constables should come here and insist on searching the barn?"

"I don't think it is likely he'll want to do any searching if he should come. We've been here all day and if we're asked we will tell him that we did not see any one answering to the description of the person he is after."

"One of the boarders may have seen your father coming across the fields. In fact, may have seen you take him into the barn."

"That's a risk I'll have to run. The chances are that none of the boarders has seen anything that has happened at the back of the house. I believe they're all sitting on the front veranda, or walking up or down the road."

"It's a good thing that Mrs. Atkins and her husband are away calling. Nothing seems to escape her eye when she's around."

"Yes, it is fortunate. When they return you and I will put the horse and buggy in the barn so there will be no need of Mr. Atkins coming here."

By that time Bob's father had finished eating, having swallowed every morsel brought by his son.

"Go outside, Will, and keep watch. Let us know if you see anybody approaching that strikes you as an officer, and give us the tip the moment Mr. and Mrs. Atkins turn up."

"All right," replied Will, and Bob let him out of the barn and then secured the door on the inside.

"Now, father, you'd better take a sleep, for you are certainly fagged out. I'll hide you under the hay up in the loft, and Will and I will keep watch."

"Very well, my son. But tell me how comes it you are here? Are you working at this place?"

"Yes. I lost the job I had in S——, and I had no luck in getting another that amounted to anything. So I started to walk to Boston, thinking I would be sure to get something to do in that city."

"Walk! Had you no money to pay your way?"

"Not a cent. I sold everything that belonged to us both to pay for the appeal your lawyer made, but without success. As it is I still owe him a balance of thirty dollars, which I promised to send him as soon as I could afford to do so."

"You should not have made the appeal, but kept the money for yourself, since I had no chance against the combination of adverse evidence that was brought against me. It was money wasted."

"Father, I could not let the slightest chance go by to save you, believing as I do, that you are innocent of the crime charged against you."

"My dear boy, you are the only friend that stuck by me in my hour of adversity. May heaven bless you for it."

"It was my duty, father. I should have despaired myself had I let you go to prison without making every effort in my power to prevent it."

"So you had to walk to Boston?"

"No, I only got as far as this place. On the road I met Will Godfrey, who is an orphan, and as poor and friendless as myself. We hitched together, for we were both bound for the same destination. We stopped here one morning about a month ago to beg a meal, and were offered a job to help around the place during the boarding season, for Mrs. Atkins, who runs this one-horse farm, takes in summer boarders, and she was looking for help. We get three and a half a week and our keep, the wages to be paid about the first week in September. We took the offer, which promised to land us both in Boston in the early fall with money in our pockets."

"You did right, my son."

"Father, do you not suspect the man who is the cause of your misfortune?"

"Alas, I have not the least foundation for suspicions against any one. All I know is that I never took the money from Mr. Tarleton's safe that I have been convicted of stealing."

"I know you didn't, but I am sure I know the man who did."

"Whom do you suspect?"

"The very last person who should be guilty of any action against you."

"And who is that?"

"The man in the office you detected pilfering from the petty cash drawer, and whom, on making restitution, and promising to never be guilty of such an act again, you shielded from the consequences that would have happened to him had you reported the matter to Mr. Tarleton."

"What, Philip Travers!" cried his father, in some surprise.

"Yes, that's the man."

"Why do you suspect him?"

"Because of the evidence he gave at the trial, for one thing. He did everything he could to make matters black as possible against you while he pretended to be deeply grieved that circumstances compelled him to testify."

"I fear you do him an injustice. How could he have robbed the safe? The combination was known only to me and Mr. Tarleton. That was one of the principal points against me—that, and the urgent need of money to take your mother South."

"Nevertheless, father, I believe he is the thief. He must have discovered the way to open the safe somehow."

"I fail to see how he could. I never told any one the combination."

"Maybe you had a written copy of it in your desk."

"I did have such a copy, but I kept it stowed away at the bottom of a certain drawer I never left unlocked when away from the office."

"He may have had a key made to fit the lock of that drawer."

"Why should he think that the combination of the safe was in writing, and that I kept it in that drawer?"

"He may have been looking for something else and found the combination accidentally."

"It is possible, but not probable."

"Who else, then, could have got into the safe and stolen the money? Who else but Mr. Tarleton knew that on the day you left the office to take mother South there was \$2,000 in bills in the safe?"

"No one that I know of."

"Some day perhaps the truth will come to light, and if it ever does the guilty man will be found to be Philip Travers," said Bob, in a tone of conviction.

"Perhaps so, but I do not accuse him of any connection with my trouble."

"Very well, father, we will not argue the subject further. It is a painful one to both of us. Come with me and I will show you where you may take a few hours' sleep in comparative security."

Bob led his father up into the loft and stowed him away in a snug corner where the hay was stored, covering him lightly with it so that his presence could not be detected except the hay was disturbed.

Then he left him and rejoined Will, who was perched on the fence close by keeping a bright lookout.

CHAPTER IV.—Bob and the Prunes.

"You haven't seen any one that looked as if he was in search of my father, have you, Will?" asked Bob.

"Two or three automobiles passed by—one with four men in it, but none of them pulled up here," replied Will. "Several men passed on foot, but none of them stopped, either."

"Good. I am in hopes of getting my father to the island some time before midnight. When all are in bed, and the house is still, I'll go to the barn and take him away."

"You'll have to borrow Jerry Long's boat. Won't it look strange for you to wake him up to get it?"

"I shall take it without his knowledge."

"But he keeps the oars in the house, doesn't he?"

"Yes, but I'll make out somehow without them. I'll carry a piece of wood to use as a paddle."

"If you want me to go along to help you I will."

"Thanks, Will, but I don't think it will be necessary."

"Where does your father think of escaping to—Canada?"

"I didn't ask him his plans, but that seems to be the nearest refuge for him."

"It's a long way to tramp, for I don't suppose he dare take the chances of riding."

"He hasn't any money to pay for transportation in any case. I shall give him the three dollars I have, which is the best I can do for him."

"I've got half a dollar. You can have that, too," said Will.

"You're a good fellow. I'll take it and pay you back when I get it."

At that moment the buggy containing Mrs. Atkins and her husband hove in sight around a turn in the road.

"Here comes the old dragon," said Will. "I'll run out in front and lead the rig to the barn, while you tip Kittie off to the arrival of the missus."

Most of the boarders were on the front veranda when the buggy drove up.

Mr. Atkins turned the horse and buggy over to Will and he led it around to the barn where he found Bob waiting.

They put the horse in its stall, fed and watered it, and pushed the buggy into its place in the barn.

Then they locked the place up again and went into the kitchen to help with the preparations for supper.

Mrs. Atkins noticed right away that some of the cold meat was missing, and she called Kittie to account for it.

Bob said he took the food to feed a poor famished man.

"You did?" she cried angrily. "Do you suppose that I keep open house for every tramp who comes along?"

"No, ma'am; but that was a deserving case," protested Bob.

"How do you know that? A tramp is a tramp, and they get nothin' from me, let me tell you. They're a lot of thieves and vagabonds, and ought to be took up on sight. Why," she cried, examining the dish, "you have given him enough for two men. Now I shall be short of meat for supper."

"I'm sorry, ma'am, but I'm willing to have you take the worth of it out of my wages," said Bob. "The man was almost starving, and I couldn't send him away in that condition."

"What sort of a looking man was he?" she asked suddenly. "Did he have short hair like them jail birds in the penitentiary? We heard in the village that four men escaped from the prison in S——. Maybe he was one of the rascals."

"He didn't look like a convict, ma'am; he had too honest a face for that."

"Honest, indeed!" sniffed the lady. "I've heard that many of the worst criminals have the most honest-lookin' faces in the world. I know of one man who was hanged for murderin' his wife and six children and they said he looked as if butter wouldn't melt in his mouth. Honest face, humph!"

Instead of giving Bob a further calling down, she let it go at that, and the boy congratulated himself on getting off so easy.

The secret of the matter was Mrs. Atkins regarded Bob as a valuable asset in her boarding-house, and she was smart enough to see that he was a boy she couldn't go too far with.

Rather than run the chance of losing his services she was willing to make sundry concessions in his favor.

Had Kittie or Will been the guilty party in the case she would have made Rome howl, and they wouldn't have heard the last of it for a week.

Mrs. Atkins made up for the shortage in the meat by cutting down the quantity sent in to each guest, and adding to the stewed fruit that was a regular feature of Sunday's tea, thereby pulling out to her own satisfaction if not to the satisfaction of the boarders.

Of course, there was no meat for Bob, Will and Kittie on this occasion, though they were blessed with healthy appetites.

When they pulled up at the kitchen table for their tea they found that their allotment was

a cup of tea, two slices of bread, a small piece of stale cheese, and a lonesome looking prune with a quantity of juice for each of them.

They didn't expect a whole lot on Sunday evening, but this layout was the skimpiest they had yet been treated to.

"Suffering snaps! One prune. Wouldn't that jar you?" growled Will.

Kittie tittered.

She had been Mrs. Atkins' steady help for two years and the lonesome prune was no novelty to her.

"How many prunes do you want, Will?" chuckled Bob.

"I could eat a dozen without winking," he answered.

"Where are the prunes kept, Kittie?" asked Bob.

"In a jar in the pantry."

"Are there any more?"

"Yes."

"Did Mrs. Atkins count what are left before she went out front?"

"No."

"Do you want some more prunes, Kittie?"

"Oh, I wouldn't dare ask for another."

"Kittie, you're wasting away to a shadow. Your clothes don't fit you any more," grinned Bob, as he rose.

As the girl was quite a plump little thing despite her short diet, she and Will laughed heartily at Bob's remark.

"What are you going to do, Bob? You don't mean to get the prunes, do you?" asked Will, almost staggered at his companion's nerve, right after the bread and meat requisition he had made on the missus' stores for his father.

"You shut up, Will Godfrey. I'm running this tea table tonight," replied Bob.

He went to the pantry, got the jar and ladled out half a dozen extra prunes all around.

Kittie almost had a fit at his audacity.

But Bob wasn't through.

He got the rest of the loaf of bread and divided that up also.

"Now we've got something to eat," he said in a tone of satisfaction. "Don't forget, folks, to throw the prune stones out before Mrs. Atkins makes her appearance."

For fear that the missus might appear unexpectedly the prunes disappeared in a hurry.

"Gosh! They tasted good, all right," said Will, smacking his lips.

"Want some more?" asked Bob.

"Lord, no; do you want us to be murdered?" replied Will.

"How did they go, Kittie?" asked Bob.

"Splendid; but I'm afraid the missus'll miss 'em."

"What do you care? You didn't take them."

"But I ate six of 'em."

"That's all right. Just forget it."

"I can't. I never had seven prunes all in one bunch before."

They agreed that they had had a better supper than the boarders enjoyed.

"I wish you always laid out our supper for us," said Will, "then we'd have enough to eat. Christopher! You had a nerve to appropriate those prunes, and the rest of the loaf of bread. When the old dragon looks into that jar she'll

think another tramp has been this way and dined off her sweets," laughed Will.

Kittie washed the dishes and the boys dried them.

Bob then secured another jug of milk, filled his pockets with crackers and appropriated a hunk of cheese.

With these things he and Will adjourned to the barn.

Brandon senior was still sleeping soundly.

Bob didn't awaken him, but laid the things down beside a lighted lantern.

Then he and Will locked the barn door again, took their seats near the kitchen door, where they were joined by Kittie.

When nine o'clock struck Kittie went to her little room in the attic, and the boys went to theirs.

Bob remained only long enough to get his three dollars and the fifty-cent piece from Will, when he crept downstairs, let himself out by the kitchen door, which he locked and put the key in his pocket.

Then he went over to the barn and let himself in.

CHAPTER V.—The Three Convicts.

Three hours later two forms issued cautiously from the barn. They were Bob and his father. It was a calm, still and warm July night. The moon was not yet up, which both regarded with satisfaction.

As they could tell everybody was asleep in Woodbine Cottage.

When they reached the road they looked up and down it, but it was silent and deserted.

"Come on, father, the coast is clear," said Bob, and down the road they started in the direction of Clear Lake, three miles away.

Mr. Brandon was much refreshed by the sleep he had had, and easily kept pace with his stalwart son.

In due time they reached the shore of the lake and Bob went to the spot where Jerry Long kept his boat moored to the landing behind his cottage.

The oars were not in the boat, but in expectation of that fact Bob had brought with him a piece of board to use as a paddle.

He unshipped the painter, got in and worked the boat to the place where his father stood waiting for him.

Taking him aboard the boy paddled out on the lake and made for Cedar Island.

It was slow and laborious work to send the boat along with only the board as a means of propelling it, but they reached the island at last and landed.

Bob guided his father to a spot that he regarded as a safe hiding-place a small cave concealed by a growth of brush close to an enormous tree that towered high above its fellows.

"No one will ever think of looking for you here, father," he said. "Better keep close under cover during the day, for there is no telling who comes here. You will find a stream of drinking water on the other side of that big tree. Some time tomorrow night, or before if I can manage it, I'll bring you a supply of food. Try and make the crackers do until then."

"I'll get along, my son, don't you worry," replied Mr. Brandon, in a hopeful tone.

"All right. I'll leave you now and get back to the farmhouse. As I have to be up at five I won't get much sleep tonight."

Bob recrossed the lake and tied the boat to her moorings just as he had found her.

Then he started to walk back to Woodbine Cottage.

After covering half the distance he sat down on a dead log, with his back against a tree, to rest.

His thoughts reverted to his father, a hunted fugitive, and he wondered if it would be possible for him to escape to Canada, where, under an assumed name, he might hide his identity and make a living for himself.

As Bob thought the matter over his eyes grew heavy, his head drooped low, and he fell asleep, lulled by the monotonous croak of the frogs in a nearby bit of marsh.

How long he slept he never knew, but he was aroused at length by voices close at hand.

"It's time we started," said a rough voice. "It's about three, and it'll be daylight in an hour and a half. The crib ought to be easy to crack by gents of our experience, even if we hain't got so much as a jimmy about us."

"Whatever you say goes, Tattum," spoke up another voice. "We're dead busted, and hungry enough to chew a ten-penny nail. If we're goin' to be took I'd jest as soon be hung for a sheep as a lamb."

"Where in thunder d'ye s'pose that Brandon chap went to?" said a third voice. "We lost him soon after we got clear of the prison walls. If he shook us he's a mean livered skunk, for he wouldn't have got out if it hadn't been for us."

"I guess he got lost in the shuffle," replied the first speaker with a short laugh, "and has likely been caught and taken back. He was one of them gents that goes wrong when they're pinched for the ready. It goes harder with them chaps when they're found out and jugged, 'cause they ain't used to bein' cooped up."

"I'm glad he's not with us," said the second man. "He'd only be in the way, and I reckon he wouldn't cotton to the lay we're on. There'll be one less to divide the swag, so there'll be more for us."

"Let's get on," said Tattum. "We want to get out of these diggin's afore daylight."

The three men, who were clearly the three convicts who had escaped from the State penitentiary with Bob's father, moved away in the gloom.

"Those rascals are going to rob some house in this neighborhood," thought Bob, who had overheard enough of their conversation to satisfy him as to their identity and the purpose they had in view. "It is my duty to prevent them from carrying out their project if I can, and secure their arrest. They have helped my father to escape, and I wouldn't give them away if they went about their business; but when they contemplate a fresh crime it's up to me to put a stop to it."

So Bob followed the men, keeping them in view as they walked along the road close to the fence, stopping when they stopped, and taking care not to expose himself, or make any more noise than he could help.

In this way they all went along until Bob saw

the Woodbine Cottage looming up ahead, and then he began to suspect that the boarding-house was the object of the rascals.

It proved so. They entered the yard and made their way to the kitchen window.

They had nothing but a stout jack-knife with which to force an entrance, but to professional housebreakers, such as these fellows appeared to be, that was sufficient to enable them to open the window.

Bob watched them from around the corner of the house, and saw the sash yield to their persistent endeavors.

They threw it up and looked inside. As there was nothing now to stop them from entering the kitchen they scrambled in one after the other, leaving the window wide open to facilitate their retreat.

After waiting a few minutes Bob made his way over to the barn, entered and secured a stout cudgel that stood in a corner. With this weapon he started for the house and let himself in by the kitchen door, which he locked, and removed the key.

Looking into the kitchen he saw no signs of the convicts so he shut the window and went into the entry.

Here he stood in the dark and listened, his heart beating quickly, for he knew there would soon be a rumpus in the house. He thought he heard sounds in the dining-room, and he made his way to the door, which stood ajar.

A faint light shone through the crack and he peered in.

The three men were in there, rummaging around.

They had lighted a candle to see by. Had there been a key in the lock Bob would have closed the door and locked them in, but there were no keys in any of the doors on the ground floor except the two in the front door and kitchen.

The rascals were searching rapidly and in a systematic way, but found little that they cared to appropriate.

The table was laid for breakfast. One of them cleared a space at the end of the table on which he spread one of Mrs. Atkins' clean tablecloths. They intended to use it to make a bundle of their plunder.

Bob knew that Mrs. Atkins and her husband occupied one of the third-floor rooms which they sometimes turned over to boarders when they were short of accommodations.

He immediately started upstairs to arouse the lady and her husband, and inform them of the state of affairs. Reaching their door he knocked softly on it.

Mrs. Atkins was a light sleeper, but the boy had to repeat his knock several times before he got an answer.

"Who's there?" asked the lady, starting up in bed.

"Bob," replied the boy through the keyhole.

"What do you want?"

"Come to the door and I'll tell you."

Mrs. Atkins seemed in no hurry to comply.

"What's wrong?" she asked.

"Thieves in the house," replied Bob, seeing that she would not come unless he startled her.

His words did the business. She was out of bed in a twinkling and rushed over to the door which she unlocked and held open slightly.

"Did you say thieves?" she palpitated, evidently much alarmed.

"Yes, ma'am. Three of them. They're the convicts who escaped from the State prison last night."

"How do you know that?" she asked in a tremulous tone.

"I heard them talking about their escape."

"Where are they?"

"They were in the dining-room a few minutes ago. I'm going upstairs to get Will to help me tackle them. You'd better wake up Mr. Atkins, though I'm afraid he can't do much unless he's got a revolver or loaded gun in the room."

"There is a revolver in our bureau, and a shotgun in the closet, but I don't know whether the gun is loaded or not. I'm afraid it isn't."

"The revolver will be better. The thieves do not appear to be armed."

"Wait here till I call Mr. Atkins," she said.

She shut the door, and presently Bob heard her talking to her husband.

It seemed an age to the boy before the door opened and Mr. Atkins appeared with a small lighted lamp and the revolver.

"Don't bring any light," said Bob, pushing him back.

"How can we see the burglars without a light?" replied the small farmer.

"If you carry a lamp they'll see you a great deal better than you'll see them. If they were armed you'd make a good mark for them. Turn the light down and leave it in the room."

Mrs. Atkins seemed to see the force of Bob's advice if her husband didn't.

"The boy is right," she said, sharply. "Give me that lamp."

She snatched it out of his hand and pushed him out into the landing and shut the door. Mr. Atkins grabbed Bob by the arm, and the boy could feel him tremble at the prospect of an encounter with the rascals, though the weapon gave him every advantage over them.

"You wait here and shoot if they come up to this floor," said Bob. "I don't think they'll be up yet awhile, though."

"Where are you going? Don't leave me alone," said Mr. Atkins in trembling tones.

"I'm going to the attic to arouse Will."

"I'll go with you."

"No. It's your place to stand at the head of the stairs here. Don't shoot unless you're sure of hitting one of them."

Mr. Atkins, however, held on to Bob's arm.

"Let me go, sir. There is no time to lose," said Bob, trying to shake off his grip.

The farmer, however, had the funks on and wouldn't let Bob go.

"Give me your revolver, then, and go up and arouse Will yourself. Here, take this club and give it to Will."

Mr. Atkins agreed to go to the attic on the errand. He readily yielded the weapon to Bob and taking the club started up the stairs that led to the attic. Left alone Bob listened for any sound that would give him an idea where the intruders were now. Not hearing anything he slipped downstairs with the weapon cocked in his hand and ready for business.

CHAPTER VI.—Bob's Exploit.

Bob stopped at the head of the first flight of stairs and listened. He heard smothered sounds coming from the parlor, so it was evident that the rascals were in there. In a few minutes he saw them come out of that room. One held the candle in his hand while the others carried a number of things they had picked up. They disappeared into the dining-room.

In a few minutes they reappeared and started to ascend the stairs cautiously, the man with the candle in advance.

"This is where I've got the bulge on you," muttered Bob.

He raised his revolver and fired at the man in advance. The stunning report startled the whole house. The man with the candle fell with a groan and the light dropped on the stair carpet. The other two convicts stopped in consternation. The warm reception they had met with was so unexpected, like a flash of lightning from a clear sky, that they stood rooted to their tracks. The faint light given by the expiring candle showed their shadowy forms to Bob and he fired at the second man. He, too, fell and the boy could hear him swearing and groaning.

"Help me, Bill, I'm shot in the thigh," he said.

His companion had started to retreat at the second shot, and paid no attention to his wounded associate. He rushed for the kitchen to make his escape, satisfied that the game was up. Bob darted downstairs after him, and saw him pushing up the window in the kitchen.

"Throw up your hands or I'll plug you," cried the boy, covering the rascal with his revolver.

The fellow saw he had no chance so he yielded to the inevitable.

"March this way," commanded the boy, and the convict obeyed.

Sounds of excitement and confusion reached their ears.

"Walk over to the foot of the stairs," was Bob's next order.

It was so dark in the lower hall that the boy could barely keep track of his prisoner, but he warned the rascal that he had him covered with his weapon and that it wouldn't be well for him to try to make any trouble.

"Bring a light!" shouted Bob, in a tone that reached all parts of the house.

The husband of one of the lady boarders appeared at the head of the stairs clad in his pajamas, with a lamp in his hand. The light showed him the situation. The first convict lay unconscious half-way up the stairs, with a bullet in his chest, which was bleeding freely; the second sat several steps below him holding one hand over his wounded thigh and muttering imprecations over his hard luck, while the third stood at the foot of the flight held up by Bob's pointed revolver.

Will now appeared with the club beside the gentleman in the pajamas.

"Come down, Will," called Bob. "I want you to go to the barn and get some rope to tie this chap I've got at the point of my gun, and also the other fellow if it is necessary."

Will slid down the banister with his club.

"Hurry up and get the rope," said Bob, when his friend landed beside him.

Changing the weapon to his left hand, but

never taking his eye off his prisoner, Bob pulled the key of the kitchen door out of his pocket and handed it to Will. Will lost no time in fetching a bunch of thin rope, and during the interim two other men boarders made their appearance, half dressed, at the head of the stairs. On the second landing, or third floor, Mrs. Atkins was trying to make her husband go down to the scene of the disturbance, but he seemed loath to do so. Naturally a timid man, his wife had taken whatever courage he might have had out of him by her brow-beating tactics, and now he was absolutely useless as a protector.

Finally on seeing the three men at the head of the first flight he plucked up courage enough to join them.

While Will was away on his errand the men above asked Bob for particulars, and he explained the situation in a few words. By the time he had concluded Will appeared with the rope, and then Bob asked the men to come down and help secure the convicts. They did so, leaving the lamp with Mr. Atkins. When Mrs. Atkins surmised that the danger was over she came down in a wrapper.

"Is that man dead?" she asked, pointing at the chap who lay bleeding on the stairs.

"No, madam," replied the gentleman in the pajamas; "but he seems to be badly wounded. Your young man Bob Brandon is a brave lad. He laid the three rascals out alone without any help. He deserves the thanks of all in the house, and he shall have it if I have anything to say."

Mrs. Atkins was surprised at Bob's nerve, and congratulated herself more than ever in having him about the house. Only for him the cottage and the boarders might have been cleaned out of everything of value. The unconscious man was lifted from the stairs and carried out to the kitchen where he was propped up on the floor. The other wounded man was placed in a chair there, while the third fellow was deposited in a corner, bound hand and foot.

"You better get your jacket, Will, and then hitch up the light wagon and drive into the village after the head constable," said Bob.

"I don't know where he lives," replied Will.

"Then get Mr. Atkins to go. Tell him to dress and you'll have the rig ready for him when he gets downstairs."

Will went up to see Mrs. Atkins about it, as she was the boss. She immediately ordered her husband to get ready and go for the constable. Will then went to the barn to hitch the horse to the light wagon. The three male guests and Bob remained in the kitchen with the prisoners. They managed to revive the unconscious man, and as he looked as if he stood greatly in need of the services of a doctor, Mr. Atkins was told to bring one back with him.

Bob was highly complimented for his courage in tackling the convicts single-handed, and capturing the entire three, and he accepted the praise bestowed upon him with due courtesy.

The guests wanted to know how he discovered that the rascals were in the house.

"You must have been wide awake, and are blessed with pretty sharp ears to hear from the attic what was happening on the first floor," said the man with the pajamas.

Bob was rather disconcerted by the curiosity of the three guests, which he knew would

extend to everybody in the house, for he did not want it known that he had been out at so late an hour, inasmuch as it would lead to inquiry as to his motive in being away, and that would be perilous to his father.

In order to get around it Bob said he was awake and looking out of his window when he saw the three men approach the house, and regarding their actions as suspicious he had dressed and investigated.

Ordinarily Bob scorned to tell a lie, and would sooner take the consequences of any act of his than try to evade it by a false statement. But in the present instance his father's safety was vitally concerned, and he felt he was justified in adopting any subterfuge that would save his only parent.

Daylight was breaking when Mr. Atkins drove up to the house with a doctor. He announced that the constable and a couple of his assistants would follow shortly in their own rig and take charge of the prisoners.

The doctor examined the badly-wounded man, and said that while his injury was serious he did not think the man would die. He fixed him up and then attended to the chap whose thigh had been perforated. By the time he had finished the constable and two deputies drove up. The constable had already heard the main points about the capture of the escaped convicts from Mr. Atkins, who gave Bob full credit for the business. After looking the rascals over he said to the boy:

"Upon my word, young man, I don't see how you managed to do it all by yourself. You certainly displayed great nerve."

"Oh, I got the drop on two of them with the revolver, and then chased the other into the kitchen where I caught him as he was about to escape through the window. You see, they had no weapons and the gun in my hands did the business," replied Bob.

"That's all very true, but it isn't every person who would tackle three escaped criminals the way you did. You deserve a medal for your performance."

The constables carried the convicts out to their wagon, loaded them aboard of it, and drove off.

It was now a quarter of five and the sun was rising, so there was no use of Bob turning in or Will returning to his bed. By the time they had freshened themselves up with a wash it was time for them to do their morning chores, and feed the live stock. Only the guests returned to their rooms, and they were not likely to sleep any more after the exciting events of the morning.

Three of the men had to get an early breakfast anyhow in order to catch a train for Boston.

Mrs. Atkins had enough to do to straighten out the parlor and dining-room, while her husband went out to milk the two cows, and Kittie started preparations for breakfast.

The three men who were going away said they'd like to have Bob drive them to the station in the village, and although this was the business of Mr. Atkins, the lady of the house consented to have Bob take his place. On reaching the station the men chipped in five dollars each and presented the sum to Bob as an evidence of their appreciation of his services in saving the cottage from being robbed.

This was a welcome as well as unexpected windfall for the boy, and he immediately laid a portion of it out in provisions for his father.

He bought a bag, put the stuff in it, and when he got back to the farm hid the bag in the loft of the barn. After he had eaten his breakfast he was called out on the veranda and handed ten dollars more as a collection from the lady boarders. Mrs. Atkins also added a ten dollar bill, as she was afraid it would look bad if she didn't show some public evidence of her gratitude. Bob now found himself in possession of \$33 and the bag of provisions, and he felt that his morning's work had been quite profitable.

Twenty-five dollars of this money he intended to turn over to his father. The first chance he got to tell Will the full particulars of how he had got on to the convicts came when they went out into the truck-patch together to gather the vegetables needed for dinner.

"It was mighty lucky for everybody in the house that you were out last night," said Will, after he had heard Bob's story.

"I guess it was; but I don't want anybody to know that I was out. It might cause suspicion and endanger my father's safety," replied Bob.

"That's right," admitted Will. "I understand now why you told that ghost story about piping the convicts off from the window. When I was awakened by the two reports of the revolver downstairs I knew you hadn't been in the room since you left soon after nine. My first idea was that one of the boarders had been awakened by your return at that late hour, had taken you for a thief who had broken into the house and fired at you. I didn't know that there were real burglars in the place till Mr. Atkins came up and told me."

Bob and Will had a couple of hours off that afternoon between three and five and the former took advantage of the fact to visit Cedar Island with Will, and carry the bag of provisions to his father. There was enough provender to last Mr. Brandon for a week, and Bob handed him the twenty-five dollars at the same time, after telling him about the stirring events that had happened to him after they had parted. Mr. Brandon was greatly astonished to learn that his son had captured the three men who had escaped from the prison with him.

"I'll have to be extra careful and you'd better not visit me again till next Sunday," he said. "The fact that the three men were captured in this neighborhood will likely lead to a close hunt for me, as it will be surmised that the fourth man must be somewhere in this vicinity, too."

Bob agreed that his father's reasoning was good, and advised him to keep in his hiding place all the week. It turned out as Mr. Brandon had said. As soon as the prison authorities learned where the three convicts were taken a posse was sent to scour that neighborhood for Brandon. Bob was interviewed by the prison officials, and when they learned his name was Brandon, too, they questioned him closer and soon found out that he was the son of the man they were after. He denied having seen his father, but they took very little stock in that. They suspected that the escaped prisoner was somewhere near by. They searched the barn and another building without results and then went off to beat up the neighborhood for miles around.

Next day Bob received a complimentary letter.

from the authorities of the State prison in relation to the part he had played in the capture of the three convicts, enclosing a check for \$300. Bob was delighted at getting the money. He deposited the check at the village bank and opened a special deposit account with it. On visiting the village the following Saturday afternoon to bring a party of new boarders to the farm house he learned with satisfaction that the fourth escaped prisoner had not been recaptured. He bought more provisions to take to his father, and on the following afternoon he and Will carried the provender to the island. When they visited Mr. Brandon's hiding place they found he was not there. They waited around there as long as they could spare the time, but he did not show up.

"I'll leave the provisions in the cave and try to get over to-morrow," he told his companion.

Several days passed before Bob found the chance to go to the island again. When he did he found that the provisions he had left on Sunday had not been touched. He hunted the island all over but could find no sign of his father. Apparently Mr. Brandon had left the island.

"I wonder how he managed it without a boat," thought Bob. "I am sure he couldn't have gone without bidding me good-bye unless he had some strong reason for making a hurried departure. I hope he may not be taken, and that he will find some safe way of communicating with me."

The days passed into weeks and the end of the summer season came around and still Bob got no word from his father. He had found out through the village constable, however, that Mr. Brandon had not been found in spite of the diligent search made for him, and this assurance gave him great satisfaction. He now believed that his father was comparatively safe from capture, and ceased to worry about the matter.

CHAPTER VII.—Bob's First Contract.

With the departure of the last batch of boarders the summer job of Bob and Will came to an end, and they were not sorry. They had worked eleven weeks for Mrs. Atkins and there was \$38.50 coming to each of them. Bob had also received about six dollars in tips from the boarders, since the capture of the convicts and he had \$8 left after giving his father the \$28.50, so that, with the \$300 he got from the prison superintendent, and his wages, he now had \$362 altogether, while Will had \$40.

"You have quite a boodle," said Will, rather enviously.

"Yes; I am pretty well fixed at present," replied Bob.

"Are you going to tackle that job on the island?" asked Will.

"I am. I've arranged with Jerry to take it off his hands, as he doesn't care to carry it out, and I'm to give Lucy a percentage of what I make out of it."

"Will the hotel company let you take it?"

"Jerry told me he'd fix that all right."

"You won't want to borrow my \$40 now?"

"No, but I'll give you a job at \$1.25 a day."

"All right," said Will. "I'm your man. Where are you going to stay while the job is on?"

"We are going to take a room at Jerry's and

Lucy has agreed to board us. It will cost us \$3 a week each."

"When do we go there?"

"To-morrow."

"And when do you expect to start the work at the island?"

"On Monday."

"If there isn't any hitch about your arrangements."

"I don't expect any. I'm a regular contractor now, and intend to put up my own \$100 forfeit that I'll put the work through all right."

Thus speaking Bob pulled some cards out of his pocket which the local printer had struck off for him. He handed one to Will. This is what his friend read:

BOB BRANDON,
GENERAL CONTRACTOR,

Jerry Long's Cottage,
Satisfaction Guaranteed. Cedar Lake.

"Are you going into the business?" asked Will in surprise.

"Surest thing you know, Will."

"What do you mean by General Contractor? Do you intend to bid on any kind of work?"

"Anything that I feel I am able to tackle with success."

"But you haven't had any experience at the business. How will you be able to bid for different kinds of work?"

"I've had some experience. I worked more than a year for a general contractor in S——, in his office and I learned how he bid on many kinds of work. I was with him when my father was arrested for stealing \$2,000 from the safe of the office where he was employed as cashier and head bookkeeper."

"Say, you promised to tell me about that matter. You say he was innocent of the charge. If he was somebody else must have pinched the money. Didn't suspicion point at any one else in the office?"

"No because my father was the only one beside the boss who had the combination of the safe. That, and the fact that he needed a considerable sum of money to take my mother, who was dying with consumption, South, in an effort to prolong her life and perhaps cure her, brought about my father's conviction."

"But if he didn't take the money he could show that he didn't have it," said Will. "As long as the goods wasn't found on him I don't see how he could have been convicted."

"It was believed that he had hidden the money so that it wouldn't be found on him in case Mr. Tarleton, suspecting him of the theft, sent an officer to arrest him and bring him back to S—— to face the charge."

"Belief isn't proof," replied Will.

"No, but when Mr. Tarleton swore on the stand that my father was the only person in the office beside himself who could open the safe, and my father admitted that fact, and also admitted that he needed quite a sum of money to take mother South, the case looked black against him since he did take my mother as far as Richmond before he was arrested."

"If your father couldn't afford to take your mother South, as you say, how did he manage to start on the trip?"

"He borrowed \$500 from an old friend who was

on the eve of taking a long sea voyage for his health, and the greater part of this money was found on him, and considered a part of the stolen \$2,000."

"Well, he could call on his friend to show that he had loaned him the money, couldn't he?"

"No. That gentleman was then out at sea and could not be reached."

"That was unfortunate."

"It certainly was; but still, even if my father had been able to prove that fact, I doubt if it would have cleared him, for the fact that he alone of the office force had access to the safe was the clincher that really convicted him."

"It seems to me that the evidence against him was purely circumstantial."

"That is true; but circumstantial evidence has hanged many a man."

"That's right. I have read of such cases; but they happened in England a great many years ago, when people were hanged for 'most anything from passing counterfeit notes to murder."

"Well, the shock of my father's arrest brought on a hemorrhage that killed my mother, and so the affair was doubly unfortunate for us," said Bob, wiping away a tear.

"Gee! That was tough," replied Will, sympathetically.

"I should say so."

"Well, you have one satisfaction—your father didn't stay long in prison."

"No, but he's a fugitive from justice, and must hide his identity under a false name, with the constant fear always over him that he may be recognized at any moment and be taken back to serve his full term, without rebate for good conduct."

"How long was he sentenced for?"

"Six years."

"And how much would have been taken off had he not escaped?"

"Two years."

"I suppose it's harder for an innocent man to put in four years than for a guilty one to serve six. I know that's the way I'd feel about it."

"That's the way my father felt. His conviction, and my mother's death broke his heart. I doubt if he would have lived out the four years."

"Then it's a good thing he escaped. In the meantime the real criminal may be brought to light—for such things do happen."

"I hope so. I am pretty sure I know who he is."

"You do?"

"Yes. I have no proof against him, however. He's a man my father was too good to, and, like a snake, the rascal turned on him."

"Wasn't any effort made to show him up?"

"No, he was not suspected even by my father. I have reason to suspect him, though, and maybe the time will come when he'll get what's coming to him."

On the following day the boys moved their belongings over to Jerry Long's cottage by the lake. That afternoon a representative of the hotel company called to find out why Jerry desired to transfer his contract to another party, and also to find out if that person was responsible. Jerry said that an attack of rheumatism would prevent him from carrying out the work, and guaranteed that Bob Brandon would do it to the company's satisfaction. Bob offered to put up a cash bond of \$100

that he would put the work through, and after some discussion the contract was transferred to him.

"I'll begin the work on Monday, and I'll see that it is finished within the time limit," he said.

"All right, young man. I'll be down here toward the end of the week to see how you're making out," replied the company's representative.

Bob and Will visited the island and went over the ground once more, and Bob decided just where he would begin operations. He then called on the men recommended by Jerry whom he intended to employ and made his arrangements with them, and hired a pair of oxen to drag the trees away as soon as felled, and drag out the stumps after their hold on the earth had been weakened.

During Bob's stay at the Atkins farm he had got acquainted with many of the village boys and girls. When they learned he had taken the contract to clear a part of Cedar Island for the new hotel small parties of them came over to watch the work after it had got well under way. Bob was very popular among them and they took great interest in seeing how he bossed the job. The work proceeded rapidly after it was fairly started, for Bob was a hustler, and didn't believe in letting the grass grow under his feet when he had anything on hand to do. The company's representative appeared at stated intervals to inspect the progress made, and pay Bob the weekly sum on account agreed upon. At the end of two weeks Bob had the ground sufficiently cleared to enable the men engaged to dig and lay the foundations of the building to begin their work. He finished his contract in five weeks, or a week earlier than the contract called for, and received the final payment, which was quite a sum, as it included what had been kept back.

"Well, how did you come out?" asked Will, when Bob had made up his accounts.

"I cleared \$275. Twenty per cent. of that I have to turn over to Lucy according to my agreement. That will leave me a profit of \$220 for five weeks' work."

"That's over \$40 a week. Gee! I wish I was a contractor."

"After paying this week's board I'll be worth \$564."

"And I'll be worth \$63. That shows you're a whole lot smarter than me, for we both landed in this neighborhood without a cent."

"Well, you must figure \$300 of that as pure luck. If I hadn't captured those convicts I would not have got it."

"I forgot about that. Still, counting the \$28 you gave your father you've made \$250 any way to my sixty odd. What are you going to do now? Start for Boston? We can go by rail now."

"Not yet. I've got the promise of another contract."

"That so? What is it?"

"I'll tell you all about it as soon as the papers are signed."

CHAPTER VIII.—Bob's New Contract.

The new contract that Bob had bid upon, and which he had the promise of, was to put up a five-foot stone wall for a distance of 300 feet along the front of the property of the president

of the village bank which faced upon the country road. The wall was also to be continued at right angles at both ends back from the road for 100 feet, making altogether 500 feet of wall. Spaces were to be left in two places for gates, the putting in of which was a separate job. Two other persons had bid on the work, but Bob's bid was much lower than either. The secret of this was that he had accidentally learned of a place where he could get good stone for the cost of leasing the ground and carrying the material away, while the men who bid against him figured on having to bring the stone from an island in Clear Lake, where there was a lot of it. Bob found he could get a year's lease for \$50 and the taxes on the property, which didn't amount to much. There were thirty acres of land and a small tumbledown house. The owner had been trying to sell the property for several years but couldn't find a buyer at \$40 an acre, what he wanted for it.

Bob got a thirty-day option on the lease for \$10. If he got the contract he would sign the lease and pay the balance. If he didn't he intended to let the \$10 go by default. The success he had made with his contract for clearing the site of the new hotel on Cedar Island was sufficiently appreciated by the president of the village bank to cause him to consider Bob's bid for the stone wall, and when the boy assured him that he could carry out the contract according to the specifications for the sum he asked, he got the job, and the papers were signed at once. Bob then signed the lease of the land and paid the \$40 balance on it. As soon as matters were settled he told Will about it and promised him a job at \$1.25 a day.

"What will I have to do?" asked Will.

"I'm going to put you in charge of the two wagons I shall use for drawing the stone from the property I've leased to the site of the wall. It will be your business to see that no time is lost in loading them, and to lend a hand doing it."

"All right," replied Will. "I'll do my part all right."

"We'll start to work on Monday. There is no time limit, but it is understood that the job is to be finished before the first snow fall."

When it became known to the other bidders that Bob Brandon had captured the contract for building the wall they didn't like it a bit. They belonged to the village, and as the boy was only a newcomer, they regarded him as an interloper, and thought he had no right to take work away from them. They held a pow-wow together at the tavern that Jerry Long frequented, and after expressing their sentiments in no uncertain way, they put their heads together and decided to do all they could to prevent Bob from carrying out the work. Jerry happened to be sitting within ear-shot of them, and heard what they said. Next day he hunted Bob up and warned him to look out for the two men.

"Thank you, Jerry, for the tip. I'll keep my weather eye lifting never fear. If they try any tricks with me they'll find out I'm a live one," replied Bob.

On the following Monday the young contractor began work on the job. The first day was devoted entirely to bringing up a supply of stone from the leased farm. On the following morning four stonemasons were put to work building the

wall. For several days the work proceeded without a hitch. Then something happened. The wagons failed to turn up at the proper time and Bob sent Will to find out what was the matter. The two men who had contracted to do the hauling could not be found, and Will returned and reported the fact to Bob.

"I'll bet this is some of Bailey and Caldwell's work," said the boy.

Bailey and Caldwell were the disgruntled contractors who had failed to secure the work of putting up the wall.

"What are you going to do?" asked Will.

"Do you know where the wagons are?"

"Riley's is in his yard and the horse in his stable."

"And Benton's?"

"I couldn't tell you."

"Well, you stay here and keep an eye on the masons. I'll see what I can do."

Bob went to the proprietor of the village hotel and asked him if he knew where he could hire a man who could drive a cart. The hotel man referred him to two or three men who were out of work. With their addresses in his pocket Bob lost no time in calling on one of them. He was at home and Bob hired him for the day, with the possibility of longer employment. He took the man around to Riley's house, and finding that Mrs. Riley had no idea where her husband had gone that morning, Bob told her he was going to take the cart and the horse and use them. The woman offered no objection as she knew her husband had been hired to do carting for the boy, and so the cart, in charge of the new driver, was soon on its way to the scene of the contract. Bob then went over to the house of the other cartman, whose name was Benton, and found out where he kept his cart and horse. Securing another driver he got possession of Benton's team and put it into immediate commission. Several hours were lost that morning, but it resulted in no delay to the work, owing to the prompt action of the young contractor. That evening Bob called on Riley and demanded an explanation.

"Why didn't you turn up this morning with your cart?" he asked him.

Riley was profuse in his apologies, claiming that he had been unexpectedly called to the next town on business.

"Then why didn't you send some one in your place?" asked Bob, sharply.

"I had no time to hunt a man up."

"How did you expect me to get along without your team?"

Riley scratched his ear and looked foolish.

"Isn't it a fact that you were induced to stay away by somebody interested in putting me in a hole?"

Riley denied that such had been the case.

"Well, I suppose your wife told you that I took the liberty of using your horse and cart with another driver?"

"That was all right," answered Riley. "I ain't kicking."

"Are you going to be on the job in the morning?"

"Sure I am."

"See that you are or you will forfeit what you have earned so far."

That caused Riley to remember that there was a clause in his agreement to that effect and he

assured Bob that the thing wouldn't happen again.

"I hope not," replied Bob, who then left his cottage and went to see Benton.

Benton had some lame excuse to account for his absence. Wherever he had been that day he was disgusted to learn, on his return home, that Bob had appropriated his horse and cart and used them with another driver. He made a kick with the man who stabled his rig, but as Bob had secured an order for the team from Benton's wife, his kick went for nothing. Bob was satisfied that Benton's excuse was pure fiction and demanded to know if he intended to carry out his hauling agreement.

"Of course I do," he replied.

"Well, if you don't show up in the morning you'll be out of it and I'll pay you nothing for the work you've already done."

Benton said he'd be on hand, and Bob departed.

On the following morning Riley and Benton were both on hand with their carts, and work went on as before.

"I'm satisfied that my rivals were at the bottom of this trick," said Bob to Will that evening on his return to Jerry Long's cottage, where the boys continued to board. "Just the same Bailey and Caldwell didn't make anything by their trick. In fact, they're out whatever money they paid the two drivers to go back on me."

On the following Monday two of the four masons failed to show up, and Bob was greatly disgusted over their apparent desertion. He laid it to their having been tampered with by Bailey and Caldwell. He at once called at the homes of the men and learned from their wives that their husbands had started to work as usual.

"Well, your husband hasn't shown up on the job, so I'll have to get another to take his place," said the young contractor, to one of the women. "I've got no time to fool with men who can't stick to business."

Bob went to the hotel and telephoned to the next town for two masons to come prepared to work. They appeared in time to go to work that afternoon, and Bob got them a place to stay in the village while the job lasted.

The two masons who had been working the previous week heard that their places had been taken by strangers and they woke up to the fact that they had been persuaded to monkey with the wrong kind of a boy. As they owed the loss of their jobs to Bailey and Caldwell they called on those gentlemen and made a big kick. The two contractors said they'd make it all right with them as they were figuring on a foundation job which one or the other of them expected to get, and sent them away with an extra \$5 bill in their pockets.

"There's no use talking, Bailey," said Caldwell, "that boy is smarter than we took him to be. We've got to try some new scheme if we expect to get back at him."

"What shall we do?" asked Bailey.

"I should say that the best thing is to get him out of the way."

"How will we do it?"

"He lives with Jerry Long at his cottage by the lake."

"I know he does."

"Jerry spends his afternoons and evenings at the tavern."

"Well?"

"I'll write a note in a disguised hand, and sign the tavern keeper's name to it, saying that Jerry has been taken with a fit, and ask Brandon to come over and take charge of him."

"What do you expect to gain by that?"

"He'll start for the tavern as soon as he gets the note and we must lie in wait for him along the road with a light wagon. I'll grab him as he goes by and you must throw a sack over his head. Then we'll secure and bind him so he can't do anything. We'll put him in the wagon and drive over to the railroad. There we'll dump him into one of the freight cars that will be picked up by the night freight bound to New York. He won't be discovered till some time to-morrow, when the train reaches its destination. In the morning we'll get somebody to tell the men on the job that their boss has skipped out and left them in the lurch. They will quit work, and when Mr. Reynolds sees his work at a standstill he'll get disgusted and is liable to hire either of us to take hold and go on with it. What do you think about it?"

"It isn't bad. I'll stand in with you and we'll pull it through."

"I thought you would. I'll provide the wagon and whatever else is needed and you can meet me outside the tavern at eight o'clock."

"I'll be on hand," said Bailey.

The two contractors then parted to meet later as agreed on.

CHAPTER IX.—The Capture of Bob.

After work was through for the day Bob and Will returned to Jerry Long's cottage for supper, the former unsuspecting that a plot was on foot to get him away from the neighborhood that night. Jerry himself seldom came home for supper, as the tavern keeper and he were such great friends that Jerry took his evening meal with him more often than not. About eight o'clock, while Bob, Will and Lucy Long were playing cards in the living room, there came a knock at the front door. Will answered the summons and returned with a note for Bob.

"A boy brought this and told me to give it to you," said Will. "He said it was important."

"Important, eh? Is he waiting for an answer?" asked Bob.

"No. He went back toward the village."

"I wonder who has a message of importance to send me?" said Bob.

"Why don't you open the envelope and find out?"

Bob tore open the envelope and what he read startled him not a little. The letter was apparently from the tavern keeper, and said that Jerry Long had been taken with some kind of a fit and he wanted Bob to come there at once and take charge of him.

"Get your hat, Will, and come with me," said Bob, who said nothing to Lucy about what the note contained, as he knew the intelligence would alarm and worry her.

"Where are you going?" asked Will in some surprise.

"To the village."

"Gee! That's quite a walk. What's up?"

"I'll tell you when we get outside."

So Will got his hat and followed him out of the house. Bob then told him who the note was from, and what it said.

"Had a fit, eh? He must be pretty bad for the tavern keeper to send for you. It would be tough on Lucy if he should die."

"It doesn't say in the note that he's as bad as that; but I thought I'd have you go along, both for company, and so that you could come back and bring Lucy if it was necessary for her to come."

As the boys hurried along up the road Will picked up a stout stick that lay in his path and used it as a walking cane.

"Say, there's a horse and wagon standing at one side of the road ahead," said Will, suddenly. "I wonder what it's doing there?"

"I couldn't tell you," replied Bob. "Maybe it's a breakdown."

They kept to the side of the road opposite the vehicle so as to pass it. When they got close to it they saw that it was not a breakdown, but just a rig hitched to the fence. What struck both of them as singular was that no one was near it. Hardly had they passed the wagon when two men, with thick veils across their faces, suddenly rushed at them from the bushes. One of the men held something in his hand that looked like a bag.

"Look out! Run, Bob, run!" shouted Will, taking to his heels.

Before Bob could follow his example one of the disguised men grabbed him by the arm. The boy whirled around and struck him a staggering blow in the face that caused him to release his hold just as his companion raised the bag to envelop Bob's head in its folds. Bob then jumped around the horse's head. The two men followed.

The boy, with the agility of a monkey, rushed to the rear of the wagon, and came out into the middle of the road again.

He spied the stick that Will had dropped in his excitement, and picking it up started on the run down the road. He supposed, in common with Will, that these men were footpads and thought their purpose was to rob him. The man chased him a short distance, but seeing that he was fleet-footed than themselves, they gave up the pursuit and stopped to consult. Bob came up with Will at the turn of the road, something over a hundred yards away.

"They've given us up as a bad job," he said.

"Gee! I was afraid they had you," said Will.

"They came near it. When you saw I was almost nabbed you ought to have gone back, picked up your stick and helped me out. However, it's all right. I got away by slugging the fellow who seized me. I'll bet he felt the blow I gave him. The other man tried to put a bag over my head, but he didn't succeed."

"I guess they stole that horse and wagon," said Will.

"I shouldn't be surprised. I dare say that kind of chaps would steal anything they could get away with," replied Bob.

At that moment they heard the rattle of wagon wheels behind them.

"Say they're coming after us in their rig," said Will. "We can't outrun a horse so we'd better hide in the bushes."

Bob thought his companion's suggestion good, so both lads left the highway and hid in the

bushes behind the fence. The wagon came up at a smart clip, and then rattled by. The two men who had attacked them were on the seat.

"They wouldn't have made much out of us if they had caught us," said Bob.

"I'll bet they wouldn't."

They were now approaching the village, and right ahead another road connected with the one they were on at an acute angle. As there was no sign of the wagon ahead they concluded that it had either gone on to the village or turned into the connecting road. In any case they judged they were no longer in danger from the two rascals. It happened, however, that the two men, who the reader has surmised were Bailey and Caldwell, the rival contractors, after failing to overtake the boys, came to the correct conclusion that the lads had heard their approach and hidden themselves in the bushes.

"We have evidently passed them," said Caldwell, "and they won't come along till they think we're out of the way. Now we can play a march on them by driving up this other road a little way, tie up the horse, and then come back here and hide in the bushes close to where they're sure to pass. We'd better head them off instead of waiting for them to pass, and we must take care to make sure of Brandon this time."

"Your suggestion is a good one," said Bailey. "We'll act on it."

Accordingly they drove up the other road a bit, hitched the horse and then hastened back to the junction of the two roads. In a few minutes they spied Bob and Will coming up the country road, quite unsuspecting of the ambush that lay in their path.

"They think they've given us the slip," chuckled Caldwell. "We'll give them the surprise of their lives in a minute or two."

"Brandon is on our side, too. How lucky!" replied Bailey.

Bob was swinging his stick carelessly to and fro and he and Will came on at a smart pace. Suddenly, without the slightest warning, the men jumped out of the bushes close to Bob. Caldwell, not caring to take any more chances with the bag if he could help it, struck Bob a heavy blow with his fist in the mouth, and as he fell back Bailey grabbed hold of him with both hands.

The boys were taken entirely by surprise, but this time Will did not run. He saw that his companion was captured, and he stood by him like a little major. As Bob dropped his stick, for he couldn't use it under the circumstances, Will picked it up. Caldwell seized the bag from his companion's arm and forced it over Bob's head.

"Blame you, let go of him!" shouted Will, swinging the stick at Caldwell's head.

Had the blow taken effect the man would probably have been stunned. It missed his head and landed on his arm and shoulder. He uttered an exclamation of pain and dashed at Will. Will struck at him again, but Caldwell caught the stick and tried to wrench it from him.

Will pulled him forward and the veil became loosened and fell off, which gave the boy a look at his countenance. The lad did not know Caldwell, so he did not recognize him, but the chances were he'd know him if he saw him again. Caldwell, with a jerk, succeeded in getting possession

of the stick and Will had to draw back to avoid the blow the man aimed at him.

Caldwell followed him up so closely that Will was obliged to retreat to save himself. In the meantime Bailey was having a strenuous time holding Bob, notwithstanding that the boy was handicapped by the bag over his head.

"Let that chap go and give me a hand," he called to his companion.

At that moment Will stooped, picked up a stone and sent it whizzing at Caldwell. It struck the contractor on the side of the head, inflicting a jagged wound, from which the blood flowed freely. The blow enraged him and he started for Will with anger in his eye. The boy fired another stone at him and ran off to a safe distance. Caldwell shook his fist at him and then returned to where his companion was holding Bob, who was quite exhausted by this time.

"Get hold of his legs and we'll carry him to the wagon," said Bailey.

"Wait till I tie his hands together," said Caldwell.

He pulled a piece of cord out of his pocket and speedily accomplished the job. They grabbed Bob by the feet and carried him off up the connecting road. Will watched their movements and followed them to see what their intentions were toward his friend. He saw them put Bob in the light wagon, mount to the seat and drive toward him in a hurry.

"I wonder what they're running off with him for?" thought Will, crouching down in the bushes to escape observation. "And they're taking him toward the village, too. I supposed they intended to go through his clothes and then leave him in the road. It appears they have some other object in view. I must follow the wagon and see where it goes."

At that moment the wagon shot by and rattled up the road.

CHAPTER X.—The Tables Are Turned On the Two Contractors.

Will darted after the wagon, caught on behind and lifting his legs, allowed himself to be carried along.

The vehicle soon passed the tavern where Jerry was playing cards with a villager at that moment and then rattled through the main street of the village. At that hour the thoroughfare was quite deserted, though there were lights in many of the stores and houses.

The wagon turned off in the direction of the railroad, and in fifteen minutes came to the siding where half a dozen freight cars were standing—some entirely empty, and several filled with freight bound either for New York City or points en route. The vehicle was stopped under a tree and Bailey got down. Will slid under the wagon and crouched down.

"We'll dump him into one of the empties and close the door on him," Will heard Caldwell say.

"All right," replied Bailey. "Shove him out."

"Here's a piece of cord. Tie his ankles together," said Caldwell.

He tossed the string to his companion and Bailey secured Bob's feet. Caldwell then leaped down himself. He and Bailey pulled Bob out of the wagon.

"Lay him down and watch him while I take a look around and make sure no one is about," said Caldwell.

As Caldwell walked off Will thought that was his chance to do something. There were lots of sticks lying around, and Will, picking one up, left the shelter of the wagon and approached Bailey from behind. When he got within striking distance of the man he raised the stick and smote the contractor on the head. Bailey fell over with a groan and lay quite still.

"That settles your hash, Mister Footpad," said Will to himself. "Now to release Bob."

He pulled the bag off his friend's head and found him senseless and partly suffocated.

"Gracious! Bob looks done up. That bag is the cause of it. Here, Bob, wake up—wake up! We want to get away from here mighty quick."

As he spoke Will shook his friend to try and bring him to. The fresh air, more than Will's efforts, brought Bob to his senses and he sat up.

"That you, Will? I thought I was a prisoner with a bag over my head," he said, looking around, as Will cut him loose.

"So you were up to a few moments ago. There is the bag, and there is one of the men who helped to carry you off in the wagon, which stands yonder."

"What's the matter with him? He looks as if he was knocked out."

"He is. I did it with a stick."

"The dickens you did! Where is the other fellow?"

"Gone off to see if the coast is clear."

"Clear for what?"

"To put you into one of those empty freight cars."

"Freight cars," ejaculated Bob. "What do you mean?"

"Take a look around and you'll see that we're alongside the railroad."

"How in thunder did I get here?"

"Those two chaps brought you here in their wagon."

"How did you come?"

"I caught on behind, hung on with my hands and they fetched me, too, though they didn't know it."

"You say they brought me here to put me in a freight car?" said Bob.

"That's what I heard one of them say."

"Why should they want to do that, I wonder?"

"It seems funny to me. Have they gone through your clothes?"

Bob felt in his pockets and pulled out two \$5 bills.

"No, they haven't."

"I suppose they meant to before they put you in the car; but I can't see their object in bringing you over here when they could have robbed you just as well where they caught you and then let you slide."

"It is certainly very curious."

"Well, here's your chance to do another bit of crook catching with my assistance," said Will. "We've got one of them safe enough. All we have to do is to slug the the other when he comes back. Then we'll carry them in the wagon to the constable and hand them over to him. That will get your name in the village paper again, with mine as your side partner."

"By George! We'll do it. We'd better tie up this other fellow while we're waiting."

Bob picked up a piece of the cord which had been used on his own hands and bent over the unconscious contractor.

Bailey was not wearing the veil over his face now and the boy caught an imperfect view of the man's countenance. He had seen both Bailey and Caldwell about the village, and knew they were the contractors who had bid unsuccessfully on the stone wall contract which he had captured.

The man's face looked so familiar to him that, taking off his hat, he struck a match behind it and held it over the contractor's face. He recognized the man at once.

"My goodness!" he exclaimed in a tone that attracted Will's attention.

"What's the matter?" asked Will.

"Why, this isn't a crook. It's Bailey, one of the village contractors."

"Is it?" exclaimed Will.

"Yes, I begin to see a light. I'll bet the other is Caldwell. They've been trying to injure me ever since I started on the stone wall, as you know. It is now plain to me that their object in waylaying me tonight was to get me away from this place so they could queer me on my contract."

"Gee! I guess you're right," said Will.

"They've treated me pretty roughly, and it was a low down trick to put up this job on me."

"That's what it was."

"They ought to be punished for it."

"Bet your life they ought."

"I've got evidence enough against them to put them in a hole."

"You have for a fact."

"We can both swear that they attacked us twice on the county road."

"We can."

"That they put a bag over my head and nearly suffocated me, besides binding me hand and foot."

"That's right. I'll swear I found you unconscious when I took the bag off your head, and that your hands and ankles were tied."

"I'll tie Bailey so he can't get away if he comes to his senses, and then we will lay for the other. If he turns out to be Caldwell, as I'm sure he will, we'll make him sick of this night's work."

Bob tied the unconscious Bailey's hands together, and then they heard Caldwell coming back.

The boys hid behind the end of the wagon and watched. Caldwell came up and at first didn't see his companion stretched out on the ground, or if he did took him for Bob.

"Where are you, Bailey?" he called out in a low tone.

But Bailey didn't answer because he couldn't.

Looking around he appeared to recognize his associate.

"Hello! What are you lying there for?"

Not a move nor a reply from Bailey.

"What's the matter with you? Why don't you answer?" asked Caldwell, impatiently.

Surprised and mystified by what he took to be his associate's curious behavior he bent down and discovered the true state of affairs. He uttered an exclamation of alarm and glanced about

for their prisoner. Of course he didn't see him, but he saw the bag lying in a heap on the ground.

"Escaped!" he cried. "Then he must have done Bailey up."

Bob, who had made a running noose out of the remaining piece of line, crept up behind Caldwell and, dropping it over his head and arms, pulled it tight.

"Grab him, Will!" he cried, and Will darted forward, seized the contractor and held him while Bob knotted the rope. "Now Mister Highwayman," continued the boy, pretending that he took the contractor for a crook, "we've got you where the hair is short."

With that they upset Caldwell on the ground and sat upon him.

"Here, let me up. What's the matter with you two? I'm no highwayman."

"Then you're a kidnapper, for you attacked me on the county road with your companion and brought me to the railroad for the purpose of sending me off somewhere in an empty freight car," replied Bob.

Caldwell began to realize that he was in a bad box. That the tables had been turned on him and Bailey by the boy they had expected to do up, and that the consequences were likely to be unpleasant.

"It's all a mistake," he said.

"You mean you and your companion made the mistake of supposing I was an easy proposition to handle. Well, you see, I'm not," chuckled Bob.

"We were only playing a joke on you," said the contractor.

"It was rather a serious kind of a joke. You'll have the chance of making all the explanation you want to Constable Howe."

The idea of being carried before the constable of the village and charged with assault gave Caldwell a cold sweat.

"Oh, come now, let me loose and I'll make it all right with you."

"I never compromise with crooks."

"I'm not a crook. My name is Caldwell, and I belong in the village."

"Get out! There's only one Caldwell in the village and he's a contractor. He wouldn't be guilty of such a mean trick as you've played on me."

The man remained silent for a moment, feeling pretty small.

"I'm Caldwell, the contractor, and I'm willing to make this thing all right."

"If you're Caldwell, the contractor, who is your friend? Perhaps he's Bailey, your business rival."

"He is."

"I suppose you and Bailey put up the job on me to get me out of this neighborhood so that you could queer my contract with Mr. Reynolds. Is that it?"

"Look here, Brandon, what'll you take to call this thing off?"

"Nothing. This is only one of your tricks. You got my two cartmen to leave me in the lurch last week, and finding that didn't work you got two of my masons to quit work. You see, I'm dead on to you both, and now that I've caught you in this last trick I'm going to make an example of both of you chaps."

"I'll give you \$100 if you let up on us."

"I wouldn't take a cent from you. What I want

is satisfaction, and I'm going to get it. Come, Will, help me put these two chaps into the wagon, and then we'll see what Justice Mills will have to say about the matter in the morning."

Caldwell pleaded with Bob not to expose him and Bailey, but the boy wouldn't listen to him. He had the upper hand of the two contractors and he was going to press his advantage to the limit. With Will's help he got both men into the wagon, and then the boys, mounting the seat, drove off to the residence of the head constable of the village.

CHAPTER XI.—Bob Lets Up on the Two Contractors.

Bailey came to his senses on the way and was astonished to find himself and his companion prisoners in the power of the boy they had tried to get rid of. Lying close together Caldwell and he held a pow-wow over the situation. Caldwell told Bailey that Brandon intended to hand them over to the constable and charge them with assault. Bailey was much disturbed to hear that.

"We're in a pretty bad box," he said. "We must try to compromise this affair."

"He won't compromise. I tried my best to get him to let up on us but he won't. I even offered him \$100."

"I'd give \$200 myself to be out of this thing. We were fools to engage in it. We didn't figure on the possible consequences."

"We'll be ruined in the village even if we should escape going to prison," said Caldwell. "We'll never be able to do any more business, and people will say we only got what we deserved."

"We'll have to move away. It's pretty hard to think about. I'd rather lose \$500 than face the consequences."

"So would I, but I guess we won't have any say about it. Just think of being delivered over to the constable in this shape, like a pair of criminals."

Bailey finally called out to Bob.

"What do you want?" asked the young contractor.

"We'll pay you \$500 each if you will agree not to prosecute us," said Bailey.

"No," replied Bob, "neither of you have got money enough to buy me off."

"Then you intend to put us in jail and ruin us?"

"You tried to ruin me with my contract job just because you were jealous that I got it away from you. You meant to send me off somewhere in an empty freight car. Suppose you had succeeded in your design and the car had been sidetracked somewhere along the route and I starved to death, what then?"

"Well, we're sorry for acting against you, and will do anything to make it all right."

"You are sorry because you have been caught and have the prospect of punishment before your eyes."

"We are sorry anyway."

"If you won't have any mercy on us think of our families. They'll be disgraced if we are sent to prison," put in Caldwell.

"You should have thought of that before you engaged in the enterprise."

They were now approaching the constable's house. At the corner of the street Bob reined in.

He had decided not to prosecute the men as he did not want to ruin them, notwithstanding that they had treated him in such a scurvy way.

"I'll bet I have frightened them clear through, and for the sake of their families I'll let them go," he said to Will in a low tone. "Hold the reins."

Then he jumped into the wagon.

"Look here, if I let up on you will you promise to let me alone in the future?"

"Yes," cried the men eagerly, "and we'll each give you \$500 to square matters."

"I told you before that I didn't want your money," replied Bob. "I'll let you go on your promise to behave yourself hereafter toward me."

"We'll do that," replied Caldwell. "We won't interfere with you any more. We've learned a lesson to-night that we won't soon forget. We are willing to admit that you're too smart for us. We apologize for what we've done to you. You see we were mad that a stranger like you should get work that we considered one of us was entitled to. After this if you beat us out on a bid we won't have anything to say, and further, if you want any help from us we'll give it to you."

Bob made no reply, but cut their bonds.

"This rig belongs to one of you, I suppose," said the boy.

"It belongs to me," answered Caldwell.

"Now, look here, did one of you send that message to me to-night about Jerry Long having a fit?"

"I sent it," replied Caldwell.

"Then Jerry isn't ill?"

"Not to my knowledge."

"And the purpose of the note was simply to get me out of the cottage so that you and Bailey could waylay me along the road?"

"I admit it."

"All right. As it's some distance from here to Jerry's cottage I'm going to drive there. Then you can have your team and drive back home. You may thank your stars that I have let up on you. Otherwise you know what you would have been up against."

Bob mounted to the seat again and drove off toward the lake, the two contractors sitting in the body of the wagon very much relieved to know that they were not going to spend the night in the lock-up, and face the justice in the morning. On reaching Jerry's cottage Bob turned the rig over to Caldwell and then he and Will got down and entered the house.

After that Bob had no further trouble with his contract for building the wall on Mr. Reynold's property. In due time it was finished to the satisfaction of the owner, and Bob found himself richer by \$300, after deducting all the expenses of the job, including the \$50 he had paid for the lease of the land where he got his stone.

"How much are you worth now, Bob?" asked Will.

"I am worth \$850."

"That's just ten times as much as I'm worth."

"Well, you aren't kicking, are you?"

"No. I'm satisfied. By the way, what are you going to do with that land? It's yours for more than ten months yet."

"I don't know that I'll do anything with it. I simply leased it for the right to take the stone from it, and I may have no further use for it."

"You might have got the stone from the island in the lake for nothing."

"But think what it would have cost me to bring it from there to the outskirts of the village. I'm \$100 in by leasing that land, and Mr. Reynolds got his wall up \$50 cheaper."

"What do you expect to do next?"

"I've put in a bid to build the new church, and Mr. Reynolds is backing me."

"I suppose Caldwell and Bailey are against you," said Will.

"Of course, and also a contractor from the next town."

"Then I'm thinking you won't get it."

"What's the reason I won't if my bid is the lowest?"

"But will it be the lowest?"

"That remains to be seen. I've got one advantage."

"What is that?"

"I can build the cellar cheaper than the other contractors because I can get the stone from my leased ground, and they can't get the material nearer than the island in the lake."

"It was a fine idea of yours to think of that land. It's a wonder that neither Bailey nor Caldwell ever thought of it in the past."

"It's the person who thinks of the best way to do things who gets ahead in this world. If you are going to be a successful contractor you've got to use your brains. Bailey and Caldwell have been working in a rut since they came here. If I had figured on getting my stone the same way they have been accustomed to do, the chances are both of them would have beaten me out on my bid. I knew there was stone on Brown's farm, and I went over there and looked at it to see if it would answer. When I was satisfied it would I put in my bid for the wall."

"It's funny that Bailey and Caldwell didn't know about the stone on the farm as well as you. They've been living here for ten years, and ought to be better acquainted with the neighborhood than you."

"Oh, they knew there was stone on Brown's place, but they were so used to going to the island for it that they didn't take the trouble to think up a new way."

"I guess you're right. There are lots of people who do business in the same old way year after year. It becomes second nature with them. They generally go to the wall in the end."

"That's right. You've got to keep up to date to hold your own nowadays," replied Bob.

"Bet your life you have."

When the bids for the church building were opened it was found that Bob's was the lowest by \$100. As he had Mr. Reynolds endorsement he was awarded the contract. The weather being too cold now to permit of operations being started on the foundations of the new church, it was not expected that anything would be done until early in the spring. As the prospect of doing anything to speak of in the village that winter was not very encouraging, Bob decided to go to the neighboring town of Mansfield to see what he could pick up there.

The train he and Will boarded was one which had come on from S——, the city where he had lived most of his life, and where his father had been employed up to the time of his arrest for the robbery of his employer's safe, and it was

going on to Boston. The car was fairly crowded, the only two vacant seats being at one end, behind two men, one of whom was sandy-haired, with a sharp looking countenance. The moment Bob got a good look at him he recognized him as Philip Travers, the man who he believed had taken the \$2,000 his father had been convicted of stealing.

"See that man right ahead of me?" he said to Will, grasping his friend by the arm.

"Yes," replied Will.

"That's the chap who was my father's assistant in Tarleton's store at the time my father was accused of stealing the \$2,000 from the office safe."

"Is that so?" exclaimed Will.

"Yes. He is the man I told you I feel sure is the real thief."

"You'll never be able to prove it, I guess."

"I'm afraid not; but the money will never do him any good."

"That fact won't do your father any good."

"That is true, unfortunately."

When the train reached Mansfield and the boys alighted at the station the man with the sandy hair and his companion also got off.

CHAPTER XII.—What Bob Heard In the Next Room.

Bob saw Philip Travers leave the train ahead of him and Will, and he wondered what business had brought him to that town. He thought it a bit singular that Travers should be away from S——, where he supposed the man was still employed in Tarleton's office, but the fact of the matter was he had been discharged by Tarleton for cause, and after hanging around S—— for a couple of months, associating with rather a fast set of companions, he had come on to Mansfield with one of his particular friends.

Travers was soon lost in the crowd at the station and Bob didn't think about him any more. As Bob had been obliged to put up \$500 cash security on his church contract he had just \$350 when he landed in Mansfield, and Will had \$75.

It was late in the afternoon, and they decided to put up at a moderate priced hotel for the night and look for a boarding-house next day.

As the town was strange to them Bob asked the station agent where they would find a cheap hotel.

"There's the Mansfield House on Jefferson Street near the river. You might try that. It has a free bus which meets all trains. If you hurry you may catch it," said the agent.

Bob and Will hurried out on the street and saw a seedy-looking vehicle which bore the name "Mansfield House," backed up against the curb. They got in and Bob was surprised to see Travers and his companion seated in it, too. They were engaged in a close conversation, carried on in a low tone, and the sandy-haired man did not even glance at the boys. On the arrival of the bus at the hotel the boys got out first, as they were near the door. Travers and his companion, however, passed them and reached the counter first, where they registered and were assigned a room. They did not go directly to their room, but strolled into the bar and billiard-room. Bob hung back until they left the counter, for he did

Brandon be pardoned and restored to his citizenship. The governor, after weighing the facts, made out Brandon's pardon, and sent it to Judge Townsend, who turned it over to Bob. All this took time and it was the first of March when Bob got his father's pardon.

In the meantime Will had secured a job in Mansfield that kept him busy, while Bob worked on sundry small contracts that he managed to pick up. After getting the pardon the problem that confronted Bob was how he was to convey the good news to his father. Believing that Mr. Brandon had made his way to Canada he inserted advertisements in the most important Canadian newspapers. It was now time for him to think of returning to Malden village to commence work on his church contract.

"What are you going to do, Will, stay in Mansfield or return to Malden with me and resume work at \$1.25 a day?" he asked his friend.

"I'm going with you, old man," replied Will, promptly.

"All right; I shall be glad to have you for my assistant. I shall raise your wages as soon as I can afford to. One of these days when I'm a big contractor I hope to have you for one of my superintendents. Then you'll make good money."

CHAPTER XIV.—A Grewsome Discovery.

As soon as Bob and Will got back to Malden village they took up their residence again at Jerry Long's cottage on the margin of Clear Lake. Bob had been in correspondence with Lucy Long while he was away at Mansfield and she kept him informed of all that was going on at Malden. Jerry had had a falling out with his friend the tavern keeper, and in consequence had quit drinking, and was now steadily employed felling trees and clearing several acres of land for Mr. Reynolds.

Bob lost no time in getting to work on his contract. He started a gang excavating for the foundation of the church, and Will, as before had charge of the stone end of the business. Masons were soon employed and the foundation walls rose like magic. The body of the new edifice was to be constructed of brick, and this was started the moment the foundation was ready. The interior carpenter work, such as the floors, windows, doors, and other parts Bob sub-let to the head village carpenter, who worked in conjunction with the bricklayers. The roof and small steeple were also to be built by this man, but Bob was responsible for the whole job, and kept a sharp eye on the work to see that the specifications were carried out to the letter.

It was well in May when he finally delivered the church, fully completed, over to the trustees and it was accepted and paid for. Bob cleared a matter of \$700 on his contract, making him worth close to \$3,000, while Will now had \$150 to his credit in the village bank. The young contractor signalized the completion of his most important contract thus far by giving a picnic to his boy and girl friends of the village during the last week in May. He put Lucy Long in charge of the arrangements, and the outing was held on Bob's thirty-acre leased farm. About

an acre of the place was covered by a wood, and the picnic was held in that spot.

Bob, Will and Jerry Long devoted several days to clearing a place especially for the occasion. They built a long table and a number of benches to accommodate the picnickers. The refreshments, which were quite substantial, were provided at Bob's own expense, and he paid for the two light wagons needed to carry his guests to the spot. The day turned out a particularly fine one, and no one invited stayed away. All kinds of games were indulged in, and everybody present declared they were having a bang-up time. At the conclusion of the dinner Bob was called on for a speech, and he made one.

Some of the other boys, and even two of the girls, got up and had something to say, chiefly complimentary of the young contractor. Bob had always been well liked, but he was now voted the most popular young man in the village, and the smartest one, too. As the young contractor was figuring on a rough stone bridge that the county proposed to put across a narrow stream now spanned by an old wooden bridge that had been condemned as verging on the dangerous, he was not sure that his supply of stone would hold out.

So after the dinner he called Will and they slipped away from the company and started off to investigate the woods to see if any more rock was to be found on the property. Among the hundreds of trees on the farm was one giant oak, more than a hundred years old, which towered above its fellows, and was a kind of landmark in that neighborhood. When Bob revisited his property just before he began work on his church contract he noticed that this chap no longer held itself up as straight as a die, like a stalwart sentinel, but was leaning over at an angle of twenty odd degrees.

He had remarked to Will at the time that the tree was evidently weakened at the roots and would fall before many weeks, probably as soon as struck by a heavy wind blowing in the direction of the angle it was sagging. His prognostication proved correct, even without the wind, for it seemed as if the tree dropped over more and more every little while. On the day of the picnic, when the party drove up to the farm, Bob noticed that the giant landmark was no longer in sight. As it was hanging high up the day before the boy concluded that it had fallen during the night, which was the fact.

"Let's go over and take a look at that fallen tree," suggested Bob, when he and Will separated themselves from the rest of the party.

It was only a short walk to the spot, and there, sure enough, lay the fallen giant prone on the ground, resting on several small trees its weight had crushed to the earth. Its immense roots, covered with earth, pointed skyward and at a score of other angles, leaving exposed a great hole in the base of the rocky ledge against which it had stood. Bob leaped up on top of the roots while Will sprang over the trunk, both intent of getting a view of the hole it had left in the ground and rock.

From his elevated perch Bob got a view of the hole which extended right into the rocky ledge. What he saw in the hole caused him to utter an exclamation of amazement. In the excavation reposed two small iron boxes, covered with thick-

headed nails, and stretched out beside the boxes lay a complete skeleton of a human being.

"My gracious!" cried Bob.

At that moment Will got a sight of the grew-some spectacle and he drew back with a startled ejaculation.

"It's a skeleton," he palpitated. "Perhaps the remains of some man murdered years ago in this wood."

"I shouldn't be surprised," returned Bob. "Look at those boxes. I wonder what is in them?"

A rush of chattering boys and girls toward the fallen tree attracted Bob's attention from the astonishing discovery he and Will had just made. The moment the girls caught sight of the skeleton they screamed and beat an immediate retreat. Some of the boys were a bit scared, but most of them did not mind the sight a bit, though they were greatly surprised.

Bob jumped down and approached the hole, followed by the bunch. The grinning skull was rather a disquieting object to gaze on at close quarters. The boxes looked old and mildewed, with great patches of iron rust all over them.

"What are you going to do with them and the skeleton?" Bob was asked.

"I'll get a heavy hammer from the blacksmith and see if I can batter the iron in," he said; "but it will be time enough to do that tomorrow."

The girls, standing back at a safe distance, were calling for the boys to rejoin them, so Bob, Will and the bunch left the strange scene and returned to the picnic ground. An hour later Bob took Will aside.

"Look here, Will, as soon as the crowd gets back they'll spread the news of the discovery of the skeleton and the iron boxes at the foot of the fallen tree. That's sure to excite a lot of curiosity and bring a bunch of villagers here. Now those boxes may contain a treasure for all we know, and if they do I don't want the news to get around. According to my lease I can take anything off this farm but the trees and the house. That clause was intended to cover only the stone, of course, but it is not so stated in the lease, consequently I have the legal right to take those boxes away if I choose to. If they were shown to contain a treasure the man who owns the farm would make a big kick, and I'd have a fight on my hands to hold it. Now I'm going to prevent that by taking an option on this property at once. Ten per cent. of the price he wants will do that, or \$120. I'm willing to risk that on the chance that there is something of value in the boxes."

"I think that's a good idea. You'd better call on him right away about it."

"I'm going to. I'll leave you in charge of the picnic."

Thus speaking, Bob started for the village at a swinging gait.

CHAPTER XV.—The Treasure That Led to Fame.

Bob found the owner of the farm at home and had no trouble in getting an option on the land for thirty days.

"How are you going to take title?" asked the man. "You are under age."

"I'll get Jerry Long to do it for me," replied Bob.

As soon as the business was finished Bob returned to the picnic ground. On the way he stopped at a blacksmith shop and borrowed a big hammer and a cold chisel. He left these articles at the house. When the picnic broke up and the boys and girls returned in the two wagons to the village, Bob and Will remained behind.

"Now to investigate those boxes before it gets dark," said Bob, who had already told Will that he had practically purchased the farm.

They got the hammer and the chisel and started for the base of the old tree. The covers of the boxes were secured by locks set on the inside in the fashion of most boxes. Bob intended to break the catches if he could. Just as he was about to begin operations on one of them Will stopped him and pointed to the ground beside the skeleton. There lay a large key, and the inference naturally was that it belonged to one or both of the boxes.

Bob seized it, and after some trouble inserted it in the keyhole of the first box, and succeeded in turning it. Then they pulled up the cover. A layer of old clothes met their rather disappointed sight. Clothes, however, wouldn't make the box so heavy, and Bob began pulling them out to see what was underneath. The box was half filled with male attire and the rest of it was filled with bags that looked as if they contained money.

"Gee!" cried Will. "It's a treasure, sure enough."

Bob pulled out one of the bags and opened it. It was filled with ten dollar gold pieces.

"Hurrah!" shouted Will, greatly excited.

Bob was excited, too, for he felt that all this money belonged to him.

"We must get it away, Will, as soon as possible," he said.

Laying down one of the woolen shirts they placed all the bags in it and then carried the treasure to the picnic ground, where they hid it in the trunk of a hollow tree. Then they returned to the excavation and opened the second box. It contained a similar number of money bags, also covered with old clothes. The boys removed the bags to the hollow tree as before.

"I'll tell you what we'll do to prevent the news of a treasure leaking out," said Bob. "We'll fill the boxes half full of stones and return the old clothes on top. Then we'll lock them and leave them for visitors to look at and speculate over what they contain. Afterwards we'll open them before witnesses with the hammer and chisel, and everybody will think the supposed treasure is a fake."

"When they hear I took an option on the land they'll suspect the reason and give me the laugh. However, to be on the safe side I mean to complete the purchase. There must be \$50,000 at least in those bags, and that's worth paying \$1,200 to get."

"Bet your life it is," replied Will.

That night Bob and Will took Jerry's hand-cart, went to the farm and carried the money to Jerry's cottage, and hid it in a box in the barn under the hay. Next morning a crowd of villagers visited the spot where the skeleton and the two boxes lay. Bob and Will appeared with

the tools, broke open the boxes and "found" them full of stones.

The "discovery" was greeted with great laughter, and the villagers returned to spread the news.

Leaving the boxes open for others to view and comment on, Bob and Will returned to Jerry Long's cottage. Jerry was away at work, and Bob, under her promise of secrecy, showed the money bags to Lucy. They carried the bags up to the room occupied by the boys, and counted it. It counted up \$125,000. Bob then boxed it up for transportation as he intended to take it to Boston and bank it there.

"I shall give you \$10,000 of it, Will," he said.

"And how much are you going to give me for keeping your secret?" asked Lucy, roguishly.

"I'm going to give you a whack at the whole of it when we are married," he replied.

Bob didn't bid on the stone bridge for the county, but went to Boston instead with Will and the treasure.

"Now that I have a bunch of money I'm going to spread myself as a contractor, Will," he said. "I'll hire an office on Devonshire Street and look out for some big job. You shall be my chief assistant, and your pay will begin, at \$10 a week."

Bob would have been thoroughly happy now if he could have found his father. His advertisements in the Canadian papers had produced no results. With plenty of money at hand he decided to advertise on a wider plan, and consulted with an advertising agency as to the best method to pursue. The manager agreed, for a certain sum, to make a very extensive effort to find Mr. Brandon, and he was able to place the advertisement at better advantage than Bob could have done himself. Our young contractor opened an office in one of the big buildings on Devonshire Street, and began to look up a job that would in his estimation, be worth his while.

One day he read in a certain paper taken by contractors that bids would be received by the government for the construction of a breakwater off a certain port. Plans and specifications could be seen and studied at the office of the engineer for the district of New England at Portsmouth, N. H. Ten per cent. of the amount of the bid, either in cash or by certified check, would have to accompany the bid. Bob decided to have a look at the job, though it seemed to be one beyond his ability to grapple with.

He called at the engineer's office, read the specifications over carefully and looked at the plans. Deciding that he would figure on the job, even if he didn't put in a bid, he applied for a copy of the specifications and got them. Then he proceeded to ascertain where he would get the material called for, and the price he would have to pay for it. A week later he learned that the plant of a big contractor was about to be sold by the widow. He called at the dead man's office and had a long talk with the manager.

He learned that the plant contained everything suitable for the prosecution of large enterprises like the breakwater. Then he called on the widow and had a talk with her. He made such a favorable impression on the lady that she consented to sell him the plant at about half its value, for a payment of ten per cent. down and the balance in nine equal payments. Bob

closed with her, and then hired the office force of the establishment with a few exceptions, installing Will in place of the late general assistant.

He called his manager into consultation and they figured out a bid on the government job and sent it in with the necessary deposit. A month later he was awarded the contract on showing that he had the money and facilities for putting it through. The job was to be finished in eight months, or he would forfeit a certain sum per day for every day it was uncompleted after the stipulated time. On the other hand, as the work was one of great importance, he would receive a bonus for every day he saved through delivery of the completed work before the eight months. Bob determined to earn some of the bonus, and he did.

The job was completed three weeks before the eight months and the government engineer notified to that effect. It was now his duty to make a final inspection with reference to its acceptance by the government. He reported that the work was first-class in every respect, and that, in his opinion, the new breakwater was the finest in the country. This fact was immediately reported through all the leading dailies, and Bob suddenly found himself famous as a contractor.

Flushed with his early success, Bob was seated in his office one morning, when his father walked in upon him most unexpectedly. Their greeting may be better imagined than described. Mr. Brandon explained that he had been working way off in the wilds of Canada and only accidentally saw Bob's advertisement in an old newspaper which he had come across. He came on to Malden village at once, and was there directed to Boston. He was surprised to find his son at the head of a big contracting plant, with a business that might now be considered worth a quarter of a million since his government success.

"Well, father, it is all due to that treasure I found on my thirty-acre farm at Malden. Only for that I never would have been able to have worked the breakwater contract, and that has been the making of me. I may say, with some truth, that it was that treasure which has boosted me into fame, and no name in my line of business stands higher with the government today than Bob Brandon, Contractor."

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The Wall Street Hoodoo

— or —

The Boy the Brokers Feared

By Gaston Garne

(A Serial Story.)

CHAPTER VII—(Continued)

Hennessey repeated Bob's threat to make Broker Bucklin see straight, and so many of the latter's friends laughed at him that he became tired of it.

He was somewhat sensitive on account of his extreme case of strabismus, and a few days later Bob applied to him for a job when he thought his shoes needed it, for there had been a little shower of rain that day.

"No; you get out of my way, and keep away;" was the sharp reply, "or I'll put a hoodoo on you that will ruin you."

"I've already got one on you, sir," laughed Bob, good-naturedly.

"All right. I'll put one on you," and that very afternoon he lost a letter from his pocket that had a ten-thousand-dollar sight draft in it.

He missed it only when he went to the bank to deposit it.

He immediately advertised its loss, and notified all the banks in Wall and Broad streets not to pay it.

As soon as Broker Hennessey saw the advertisement he burst into a hoarse laugh, and told the story about Bob's threat to hoodoo him.

Of course the parties repeated the story.

It put him to a great deal of trouble, for the bank that issued it was in no hurry to issue another one, lest the loss fall upon that institution.

The draft was never found, or at least was never heard of again, nor did Bucklin cease to hear of the joke at his expense.

Of course he didn't believe in the hoodoo business at all. He was an incorrigible joker. He hired a young fellow to play a practical joke on Bob to make good his own threat to hoodoo him.

He was to have his shoes shined on the corner of Wall and Broad streets, and the fellow was to come along and give Bob a tremendous kick as he was down on his knees at work.

Of course Bob was unsuspecting. The fellow came along and gave him a tremendous kick with the sole of the shoe instead of the toe. It was like the kick of a mule. Bob went squarely between Bucklin's knees, upset him, and he fell flat on the pavement, and not only saw stars, but lost half a pint of blood from his nose.

The fellow, seeing the result of the kick, took to his heels, notwithstanding he had been hired to give it.

Unfortunately for Bucklin, he let two of his friends into the secret, and they were on the other corner, watching.

Bob picked himself up, looked around for his assailant, but found he was out of reach.

Bucklin went inside the drug store, up on the corner of Broad and Wall, where he bathed his

bruised proboscis, and said things in an undertone that were harsh enough to smash everything around him.

The story got out, and the brokers began humorously discussing the question of whether Bucklin or Bob had been hoodooed.

Bucklin was compelled to keep out of Broad street for a week, as the accident caused much discoloration under both eyes.

Meanwhile, Bob, while polishing the shoes of a couple of brokers, heard them talking about a certain stock that was to be cornered.

Neither of them mentioned the name of it, but the next day Bob reported it to Hennessey.

"All right, Bob. I'll watch those fellows. I don't know of any corner that's being arranged, but if I find out I'll let you know."

Upon leaving the office that afternoon Hennessey met him and told him to be sure to come up to his office the next morning. When he did so the broker advised him to go over to the little Nassau street bank and buy D. & H. shares.

"You haven't drawn any of your money out of the bank, have you, Bob?"

"No, sir, not a penny."

"Well, go over and draw an order for \$160; that will leave you five dollars. Give it to the margin clerk and tell him to buy D. & H. shares for you. That will buy you 16 shares."

Bob did so, and a few days later it was reported in the papers that D. & H. had been cornered in the Stock Exchange and the price began climbing up with marvelous rapidity.

Hennessey himself bought several thousand shares.

The excitement rose, and it seemed as though every broker in the Street was trying to buy the stock.

Finally Hennessey told Bob to sell out.

He went over and ordered a sale, and saw that he had made \$17 a share. Bob made a mental calculation and then exclaimed:

"By George, but that beats shining shoes!"

CHAPTER VIII.

Bob Takes Great Chances.

Young Whiddon now had a little over \$400 in the bank, and he felt that he was rich.

He had begun to realize by this time that Broker Hennessey's advice was good.

He vowed to himself to keep his eyes and ears open and his mouth shut.

D. & H. shares went up several points higher than he had sold out for.

Then came the crash.

Scores of brokers had lost, and as many more, perhaps, had won heavily.

Bob was quiet, however, and kept busy at his shoe-blackening.

By this time the other bootblacks had decided to leave him severely alone.

Not one of them would associate with him. But that was on account of their fear of him.

The little fellows really believed that he had the power to cast a hoodoo spell on whomsoever he chose.

On the other hand, he had no desire to cultivate their acquaintance.

One day an Italian bootblack invaded the Street. He was a strongly-built, swarthy-looking fellow, apparently twenty years of age.

The other boys made war on him, but Bob let him alone. He had nothing to say to him.

The fellow could speak English very imperfectly.

Finally one of the bootblacks came over to him and asked:

"Look here, why don't you put a hoodoo on that Dago?"

"Because it's none of my business. He's not bothering me."

"Well, he's taking business away from you and the rest of us."

"Look here, sonny," said Bob, "where did you get the idea that another fellow hasn't a right to make a living as much as you have?"

"Why, this is our field down here."

"It is, eh? How did you come to own it? How much did you pay for it, and who sold it to you?"

"Well, we came down here first."

"You did, eh? I guess there were shiners down here before you or I were born. Nobody has a right to claim a part of the city as his own unless he has bought it. This is a free country."

"Well, we ain't going to let no Dago come down here and take business from us."

"You want to look out for that Dago," said Bob. "I never saw one of those Italians who didn't carry a knife, and the first thing you know some of these fellows will get a stab that will put him in the hospital, if not in the ground. Let him alone. You have no more right to keep a man from coming down here to shine shoes than the brokers have to keep another man from coming down here to buy stocks."

"Say, how much will you charge us fellows to put a hoodoo on him?"

"A thousand dollars."

"You must think we boys are Vanderbilts!"

"No. I don't. I'm not going to bother that fellow or anybody else who doesn't bother me. What you want to learn is to put up a good shine, be quick about it and don't annoy people."

The little fellow went back to his companions and reported what Bob had said to him, of course they all hated him worse than ever, if such a thing were possible.

One day Bob was polishing a gentleman's shoes down in Broad street, nearly in front of the Mills Building.

He had finished one shoe when another man came up, and Bob heard him say to him:

"He hasn't got any. But he said he thought he knew where I could find some."

"Well, did he tell you?"

"No; but he said he would find out."

"Oh, of course. He wants to make something for himself. But say, here comes Blumenthal. He deals in mining stock, and it's quite likely that he has some of it. If you can't get it at a dollar a share pay him a dollar and a quarter."

The man designated as Blumenthal came by, and the other hailed him with:

"Say, Blumenthal, have you any Round Hill shares?"

"Yes, I believe I have quite a block of them. What are you paying for them?"

"Well, not much, of course. We want to get some to send out of town."

"All right. I can let you have a thousand shares at a dollar a share."

"I'll take them."

"Come to my office in half an hour and I'll be there," and he passed on down the street.

"Good luck! Good luck!" chuckled the man whose shoes Bob was shining. "You want to hurry up. Get all the shares you can before the news gets out."

Bob saw the two men were in real earnest, and when he finished his job he saw them go off in a big hurry.

"Round Hill shares," said Bob. "That's mining stock, for I heard one of them say so. They are anxious to get all they can before some sort of news reaches the Street."

He at once bought a paper and searched the reports of mining shares, but couldn't find Round Hill shares quoted at any price at all, and he wondered if the thing was a joke.

Still, for the life of him he couldn't get rid of the idea that those two men were not in dead earnest, so he went around in the vicinity of the mining exchange, picked up a customer, and while shining his shoes he asked:

"Say, mister, do you know who has any Round Hill mining stock shares for sale?"

"Yes; I am stuck on some myself. Are you buying that stock?"

"No, sir but I know a man who wants some for the pictures on the shares."

"Yes, that is about all they are worth, just the pictures."

"Well, what will you sell the pictures for?"

"Oh I'll sell them for any old price. If you'll take what I've got I'll let you have them for fifty cents a share, so run and bring your man to me."

"All right. Will you wait here for me?"

"Yes," and Bob, having finished the job of shining, made a rush for Nassau street.

He asked the margin clerk if he would buy some Round Hill mining shares for him.

"No; wouldn't touch it with a ten-foot pole," said he, "and you had better not buy it. It is no good."

"All right. Let me have four hundred dollars of my money, then."

"All right; make out another order for it and go to the cashier with it."

Bob made out the order for four hundred dollars and went to the cashier and got the money.

He stuffed it in his pocket and ran back to the mining exchange.

"The man couldn't come," said he, "but he gave me the money to take 800 shares of it."

"All right, then. Come around to my office."

Bob followed him to his office, where he bought 800 shares of the Round Hill mining stock and paid down the cash for them.

The proper transfer was made out, and he hurried to the Nassau Street bank, arriving there just in time to get in before the doors were closed.

He handed them to the margin clerk, asking him to take care of them for him.

The clerk looked at them and said:

"No! we don't bother with such rubbish as that."

(To be continued)

Fame and Fortune Weekly

NEW YORK, JULY 29, 1927

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INTERESTING ARTICLES

ARE YOU A CONTRIBUTOR?

Motorists now pay between \$75,000,000 and \$100,000,000 a year in fines for violating the traffic laws, according to the American Automobile Association. That organization plans to war on small towns which derive a considerable revenue by fining transient autoist for the slightest infraction.

FRANCE HAS GOOD ROAD BUILDING PLAN

With an appropriation of 2,000,000,000 francs the French Parliament has passed the largest Government sum ever made for roads and bridges. The Republic is now ready to begin the long delayed work on its highways for restoring them to their prewar rank. A total of 6,500 miles of main roads will be built.

JAZZ CRITICIZED BY STRESEMAN AT MUSIC FIESTA

Three of Europe's outstanding statesmen—Foreign Minister Stresemann of Germany; Minister of Education Herriot, of France, and Foreign Minister Vandervelde, of Belgium—met to inaugurate the international exposition of "Music in the Life of Nations."

Dr. Stresemann, who opened the exposition at which the musical art of seventeen countries was represented, criticised jazz and negro rhythms and frequently was interrupted by applause.

He decried the present day "dead levelling of music" and regretted the modern saxophonic cacophony. He pleaded for a reawakening of spirituality in music.

PREDICTS ATLANTIC FLYING IN TEN YEARS

In a speech before the Minnesota society tonight Col. Lindbergh predicted that regular air transportation over the Atlantic between large cities in the New World and those in the Old was inevitable, but not probable for ten more years.

Introduced by Secretary Kellogg, who is a Minnesotan, Lindbergh was unable to speak for several minutes because of applause.

"While this trans-Atlantic flight is centering so much attention on aviation," he said, after the crowd was quiet. "I'd like to say a few words as to the possibility of regular trans-Atlantic flying. Many people think we shall see such flights within a few months but it is hardly possible. as I see it, for us to have regular trans-Atlantic flying within one year or even a few years.

"It will take ten years, possibly, of research and preparation to place trans-Atlantic flying on a solid foundation for regular public service. Unless it is given a solid foundation of that kind it is practically certain to be a failure. But I think there will be regular trans-Atlantic flying within ten years."

LAUGHS

"The country is simply being ruined by this idea of rushing everything." "Yet where would this country have been if they had arrested Paul Revere for exceeding the speed limit?"

She—If you were worth the million and I was poor, would you marry me? He—If you feel like transferring the fortune to me and taking chances I will give the matter my serious consideration.

Landlady—I believe in letting coffee boil thirty minutes; that's the only way to get the goodness out of it. New Boarder (tasting his and leaving it)—You succeeded admirably, ma'am.

"Is that an eight-day clock?" said the young man, as the timepiece struck the midnight hour. "Well," replied the sweet young thing with a yawn, "why don't you stay a little longer and find out?"

"Tommy, your master's report of your work is very bad. Do you know that when George Washington was your age he was head of the school?" "Yes, pa; and when he was your age he was President of the United States."

Doctor—If you must know, ma'am, your husband won't live twenty-four hours longer. "Goodness gracious!" ejaculated the broken-hearted but economical woman, "and here you've gone and prescribed enough medicine for five days!"

"What you need," said the doctor, after giving his patient a thorough examination, "is to get out in the open air more than you do. Take a long automobile ride every day." "But I haven't got a car," objected the patient, "That's all right. I'll sell you mine."

Mother-in-law—The doctor said I was all run-down and needed strychnine as a tonic. Now, I don't want to take too much. How big a dose do you recommend? Son-in-law (hopefully)—I wouldn't take more than a gallon to begin with.

The Fatal Bite

It was a sad sight that I looked upon in that little mountain cabin, on that June morning, in the year '74; it was a sight that set my young blood aflame, and I shut my teeth to keep down my emotions.

A bearded young miner lay dead on the cabin floor. He was still rolled in his blanket; the embers of a late fire were seen near; a bench, wash-basin and a cracked mirror composed the principal furniture of the room. It was the usual miner's cabin to be met with throughout the gold regions of California.

A score of men had gathered in and about the cabin, all intent on viewing the horror—the mangled corpse of Paul Landon—as jovial a young miner as the mountains of the Golden State could boast.

"Who hez did this thing?"

It was a gruff voice at my side that put the question.

"We haven't discovered the villain," I answered, proceeding to make an examination of the corpse.

A man stood near with folded arms, pallid face and dry eyes, gazing at the face of the dead as though fascinated. When I asked who he was, Captain Turner, a mine boss, said:

"That's Seth Shott, the dead man's pard." Then he continued in a whisper: "Twixt you and me, he's the man who's guilty of this. I know it, and I'm going to speak to the boys."

I was somewhat astonished at this moment. Captain Turner was a trusted man, one in the employ of the Mountain Lode Company, and it was in the interest of this company that I was visiting the mines. Speculation was suspected, and I was sent up to look into the affairs of the company in general. I was to have all the time I needed and work in my own way. I hadn't been here a week when Paul Landon was found murdered in his cabin.

I was somewhat new in the detective business, but here was something that promised "pay dirt," and I resolved to follow the lead.

I turned and regarded Seth Shott fixedly, after the captain's whispered suspicions. Other eyes were fixed upon him, too, as he stood there with folded arms gazing down into the face of his murdered friend.

Was it possible, though, that this rather handsome-looking young man would lend himself to such a crime? His countenance did not betray his evil nature, if the captain's suspicions were true.

Dark scowls began to gather on many faces, and a murmur soon filled the room.

"Lynch the murderer!"

A voice uttered the cry, and then several hands were laid on Seth Shott, and he was dragged from the mountain cabin into the June sunshine.

"Boys, what does this mean?" Seth Shott expostulated, but all to no purpose. He was dragged to the roots of a tree, a rope was produced, and an effort made to place it over the young miner's head.

The scene was a shocking one to me. I turned to Captain Turner, who looked coolly upon it all.

"Captain, in heaven's name! why don't you stop this?" I cried in horrified wonder.

"It's justice. Let 'em proceed."

"I will not; this is worse murder than the other," I cried, drawing my revolver, and pushing my way to the side of Seth Shott.

"Back, men, every one of you! Seth Shott is innocent! You shall not murder an innocent man?"

The muzzle of my cocked weapon had its effect, and the brawny miners shrank back, while Shott straightened to his full height and cried:

"The gentleman from 'Frisco tells you the truth, pard. I would sooner have cut out my own heart than harmed a hair on the head of Paul Landon. Heavens! how could I hurt Paul. He and I have been chums since we left New York three years ago. We were schoolboys together, and loved one another like brothers. Would I harm him now? Impossible. We had some nuggets laid by. It was for these the murder was committed I expect, but the assassins failed to get them.

"I was not in the cabin last night. I did not come in from 'Frisco until this morning. I can easily prove an alibi if you give me a chance."

I again addressed the crowd, and soon the miners began to act like reasonable beings once more. At this point Captain Turner stepped in and urged the necessity of punishing the vile assassin at once. I could see that the captain was anxious to see Shott hang.

Why this enmity?

I managed to get Shott aside. I was not sure of his innocence, but deemed it but fair to give the man a show for his life. After escaping from the crowd, Seth Shott grasped my hand and blessed me for the interference that had saved his life.

"Before heaven, I am innocent!" he said, solemnly. "I cannot remain here, however, for Captain Turner would set his hounds upon me. If you do not object, I will leave the mountains and seek a place of safety for the present. In the end I mean to see poor Paul's murderer swing."

I believed the young fellow uttered the truth, and made no attempt to detain him. In fact, I knew that, whether innocent or guilty, he would surely hang if he remained in the mines, and so believed it best for him to go.

"I can procure a good horse not far away. Tell the boys I will see them again some time."

Seth Shott pressed my hand and was gone. I was glad to see him go, for I believed he was an innocent man. The murder mystery must be solved, and the task of solving it was mine.

Captain Turner was very angry when I saw him again, and he threatened reporting me to the company.

"You can do as you like, Captain Turner," I said shortly. "I have only done my duty, while you have attempted murder."

"I'll get even with you for this," he grated, turning away white with rage.

I paid no heed to the threat, but went back to the tragic cabin, and once more bent beside the corpse of Paul Landon. I was anxious now to find a clew that would lead me to the trail of the rascally assassin.

Something about the bearded lips of the dead man attracted my notice. The mouth had fallen open and clinging to the lower teeth was a bit of human flesh. I thrust in my finger and drew it forth. The flesh had been bitten clean, and was nearly the whole upper part of a human ear.

I started to my feet with a low, amazed cry. Here was a clew indeed. To find the man with the mangled ear would be to find the assassin of Paul Landon. I secured the bit of gristle, and at once rushed from the cabin. From one of the miners I procured a small bottle of whisky, and into this dropped my trophy.

On the following day, when I went to visit Captain Turner, he was not in the mines.

"Gone to 'Frisco," was the answer to my inquiry.

I did not follow immediately, however. I was first anxious to examine all the ears among the miners in the vicinity. Most of them were long-haired customers, and it required close investigation to discover the condition of their auricles. It was accomplished at last, however, and no man with a missing ear discovered.

The case was more important than the minor one that had brought me to the gold range, and I would not now give it up, so one morning about three weeks after setting foot in the mountain mining camp, I turned my face once more toward the coast.

I reached San Francisco in good time and with no mishap, reported to the Mountain Lode Company, and then set out on my own account to hunt down the mountain assassin.

Shortly after reaching the city, I ran into Captain Turner. I was glad to meet him. He received me with a smile and extended hand.

"It was all owing to your youth, and inexperience; I forgive you, young man; but you might have seen the murderer of Paul Landon swing if you had held your peace. No, I'm not going to the mines at present. I think I shall do a little detective work myself. The murderer is in 'Frisco, and I shall secure him."

We separated to go our respective ways. I had no confidence in him, and did not offer to make a confidant of him. I suspected his feelings for me were similar.

I remained in 'Frisco a fortnight before aught occurred to stir my blood and give me an appetite for food.

A barroom row, in which one man was slain, caused some commotion, since the murderer successfully eluded the police and had not been caught during the following day. It was really not a matter for me to investigate, yet I went to the saloon, and picked up what news was going regarding the racket.

"One-eared Jake be-spected," said the barkeeper. "He's keepin' hisself pretty close, anyhow, for the cops hain't run 'im in yet."

I started instantly at the name.

"A most singular handle for a man," I remarked. "Do you know why he is so called?" "Coz he got his ear chawed off in er row onct afore."

Here was subject for reflection surely.

This was my man, and if the police did not make this murder stick, I at least had one against him that would.

I went from the saloon with a full description of the man called One-eared Jake on my brain.

That evening I sauntered into a cafe on — street, and met face to face Seth Shott. He knew me at once, and we shook cordially. He was well dressed and seemed considerably changed.

I invited him in to a glass of wine and social

chat. I had many questions to ask, as he might know some of the enemies of Paul Landon if he had any. I meant to make a confidant of Seth, for I liked him exceedingly on short acquaintance.

He accepted my offer, and we were soon comfortably seated at a table with a bottle of wine between us.

"Paul hadn't an enemy, unless 'twas Captain Turner, who was the meanest coyote in the mines," asserted Seth, as he became warm with the generous wine.

At length our conversation turned upon the late saloon row, or at any rate I led the conversation in that direction, and was astonished to see that Seth Shott became suddenly excited and nervous as well.

"They say that One-eared Jake killed the man —"

"Do you say so?"

I paid no heed to the inebriate's volley of angry words, but only glared sharply through my glasses at the right side of his head.

What was it I saw?

That which thrilled me as never before. For the first time the hair had become disarranged, and I made the discovery that the upper part of Seth Shott's ear was gone."

On the instant of my making this astounding discovery a new-comer appeared upon the scene in the person of Captain Turner. He stood directly behind Seth Shott while he was pulling off his coat.

Of a sudden he laid his arm on his shoulder.

"Seth Shott, you are wanted!"

The miner turned, glared into Captain Turner's face with a scowl of rage.

"You are my prisnoer, sir!"

"For what?"

"For the murder of Luke Jones, in Snyder's place last night."

"It's a lie."

The miner attempted to draw a weapon, and a desperate struggle ensued. I was on my feet in a moment and went to the assistance of the captain.

"You helpin' this villain! I thought you was my friend," cried Seth Shott, glaring rebukingly at me.

The man had the bracelets on now, and was harmless. The captain turned to me with a word of thanks.

"Never mind, captain," I said. "I should have arrested him if you had not."

"I thought you were willing to swear to the man's innocence a few months ago. What evidence have you now? I knew then he was guilty."

"This is my evidence."

I procured the bottle containing the bit of gristle—part of a human ear—that was soon shown to fit exactly the mutilated right auricle of Seth Shott.

In the trial that followed, Shott was not convicted, but he was at once arrested for the murder of his late partner, Paul Landon. On the day of trial, he made a full confession of the crime. He had killed his friend for his share of the gold. Knowing that bit of ear would convict him, he "caved." Afterward he paid the penalty on the scaffold.

TIMELY TOPICS

"SLOW POKE" DRIVERS ARRESTED

Police in Chicago are making a practice to arrest "slow poke" motorists who not only creep along at ten miles an hour, but insists on taking the middle of the road regardless of others. It has been found that speed, both slow and fast, is what makes driving on the highways so dangerous.

HOUSEWIVES NO LONGER SHUN PAINT BRUSH

There was a time when women regarded the paint brush with awe, largely because they had always been told that women could not paint, and it was no use trying. But that day has gone by, and perhaps the dealer around the corner who sells mixed paint in small sizes is largely responsible. Not so many years ago mixed paint came only in large cans, and it was poor economy to buy a gallon of paint to redecorate a kitchen chair. But for 30 cents one may now buy enough paint to do a fair-sized job.

Consequently, woman uses the brush on her porch furniture; she even tackle walls and ceilings.

LIMBURGER CHEESE CAST OUT BY THE GERMAN PEOPLE

Limburger cheese has fallen from grace in democratic Germany, members of the Reichstag Agricultural Committee recently learned from the lips of prominent cheese manufacturers.

Once the supreme delight of stanch beer garden frequenters, limburger has completely lost cast and is now a drug on the market, the committee was told.

"The public's taste has changed," said one expert. "We are now trying to meet the post-war taste by manufacturing fat-containing hard and soft cheeses along French lines."

Minister of Agriculture Schiele added that economic condition also were responsible for the change in the public's taste. Following the war there was such a craving for fats that the fatter cheeses were preferred.

A STRING OF QUESTIONS

If the death penalty will not deter from murder, what will? This question of a learned judge is arresting. What would have kept Judd Gray from becoming a murderer? Will the modern man with his childish notion of law as a cure-all ever discover that men go straight when they think straight and mainly only then; when they do not drink liquor not because there is a law against it or none, but for the reason that they regard it as unscientific and a form of slow suicide? Which would do most for society, another Sing Sing or more industrial schools like Henry Ford's? Is the criminal an average youth who prefers to be bad or has he been badly started—badly staged and managed? When a child has a bad start can society afford to allow him to add to it an ordinary education? Are we a little tardy in mobilizing for his potential criminality?

FRANK OTTO.

SCHOOLBOY IS DESIGNER OF A FLAG FOR ALASKA

A flag that will float over the great Alaskan country and later, perhaps, over the State of Alaska has just been designed by a boy half white and half Aleut Indian. The winning design was the outcome of a contest, held under the auspices of the Alaskan American Legion, in which school children from all parts of the Territory competed. The winning design consists of the Great Dipper and North Star in gold, mounted on a blue field.

Benny Benson, the winner of the contest, 16 years old, is in the seventh grade in school. He has been an inmate of the Jessie Lee missionary home for native and half-caste children since 1916.

Benny is small of stature for his years and swarthy of skin. He speaks with the staccato clipping of words common to the Indian race, and knows more about fishing, hunting and trapping than about anything else. Until a year and a half ago, when the mission home moved from Dutch Harbor to Seward, he had never seen a train or an automobile.

GAS MADE AVAILABLE FOR EVERY HOME BY PORTABLE TANKS

There is a new gas service for use in localities not supplied with city gas. It is not a liquid fuel, but real gas derived from natural gas and is delivered anywhere in tanks. This new gas service enables the woman who has wished for years that she might enjoy the convenience of a modern gas range to realize her dreams.

There's nothing difficult about the installation or use of this new fuel. It is supplied by a firm of unquestioned reliability and financial strength. The outfit consists of a steel cabinet for holding two tanks of gas and the controlling equipment, and a modern gas range with even heat regulator, made by the largest manufacturers of cooking appliances in the world.

The gas is delivered in containers, each of which holds approximately 5,000 cubic feet of gas. These containers are installed in the neat steel cabinet placed against the outside of a real wall of the house. From this cabinet a standard gas pipe conveys the gas to the range and other appliances.

There are two tanks in the cabinet. When one container is exhausted, the second one is there, ready for use. A call or a postcard brings the service man with a new tank. He opens the cabinet with a master key, removes the empty container and connects up the new, full one—all without entering the house or disturbing the gas service.

Think what a Godsend this new fuel will be to the mothers of small sons who dislike chores! Instead of "ding-donging" all day at son to fill the wood box, carry in the coal, or empty the ashes, mother can now light a match, turn on the gas, and do her cooking and baking as quickly and conveniently as her city sister.

ITEMS OF INTEREST

YOUTH, WHO WEEPS REAL TEARS, GIVES EXHIBITION ON BUSES

A youth who can weep realistically without even smelling an onion is one of the stars of the six Glasgow boys who will assist Sir Harry Lauder in the film, "The Hunting Tower." He is Robert Mackie and while he is here he is earning pin money by weeping exhibitions on buses.

BRITON FINDS NEW WAY TO GET AUTO REPAIRED

A new way to get one's automobile repaired has been discovered by a London man. The formula is to leave it standing alongside another one of the same make in the hope that the owner of the other car will mistake it for his own and put it in order.

Anyway this happened at a seaside resort this week. A Londoner returned in the evening to the place where his car was parked but on getting into it he found that it wouldn't start. Thereupon he climbed out, removed and cleaned the spark plugs, tuned up the magneto and adjusted the carburetor. The car started off beautifully just as the real owner rushed up shouting "Police." The first man then found his own car just behind the one which he had so kindly repaired.

NEW TYPES OF TRUCKS

Three new types of four-cylinder dump trucks with nominal ratings of two and one-half, three and one-half and five tons, respectively, recently have been added to the already very complete line of motor trucks manufactured by the International Harvester Company.

The chain-drive truck appeals to many people because of the simplicity of the chain mechanism, the ease with which adjustments and repairs can be made while the truck is on the job, and also the ability of the truck to pull out of gravel pits and excavations. Both models are provided with a wide range of gear ratios. The transmission includes four speeds forward and one reverse. In the larger models, 74-C and 14-C trucks, in addition to the reduction gear type of drive, the live axle has a two-speed range, which provides an exceptionally wide choice of power applications.

ROME'S SUBWAY BUILDERS TO BARE CITY OF CAESARS

The first real step toward modernization of Rome—construction of a subway system, upon which work is soon to begin—is expected to bring to light more of the ancient city than all the archeological investigations have done since the fall of the empire.

In cutting three underground lines, with total length of nearly fifteen miles, through the subsoil of the Eternal City, engineers will be virtually working at the street level of the Caesars, since modern Rome in most places lies on a thirty-

foot coating of debris which through ages has accumulated over the original surface.

Particularly in that part of the city where modern traffic requirements necessitates a central junction of the subway lines—a point between the Roman Forum and the Trojan Forum not far from the Coliseum—excavations are expected to reveal dozens of ancient edifices.

The situation of many of these relics has been for centuries, but their wholesale uncovering had been considered impossible until growth of traffic made subway construction necessary.

Engineers will work with expert archeologists who, it is understood, have the power of ordering deviation of the lines to avoid injuring antiquities.

A special "Subway Museum" will probably be created as a repository for the finds taken during the twelve years' work.

SILENCE IN THE LUMBER CAMPS

Visitors to lumber camps in the big woods of Northern Maine or Canada are impressed with the silence at table. It seems strange, this subdued brand of dining deportment, in direct contrast to the boisterous, rollicking demeanor of the woodsmen when in the open. Yet it is an inflexible custom.

Some camps post such signs as "No Talking at the Table" or, "Silence at the Table." The experienced woodsman, however, knows the custom and abides by it. It is the unquestioned edict of the cook. There must be no dallying over coffee and cigarettes. In fact, coffee is gulped and cigarettes are barred. The cook's slogan is "Eat and Get!"

This is a rule of reason. The cook has so much to do. It is seldom that the dishes from one meal are washed before it is time to prepare for the next. The cook's helpers, or "cookees," have to cut the wood for the stoves. This is hauled into the camp yard as logs, and it is up to the "cookees" to saw and split these into the proper lengths. It takes time. And there are innumerable details remaining. All these take time.

Experience has demonstrated that when conversation is permitted at table in the lumber camps, arguments are inevitable. And arguments generally consume a lot of valuable time and not infrequently end in trouble. Occasionally, newcomers to the camps will challenge the cook's right to enforce silence. Generally these troublemakers are from the cities. Recently a New York rough, who had sought the isolation of a Northern Maine lumber camp for reasons best known to himself, persisted in talking after the cook had admonished him that conversation was prohibited.

"Who'll stop me?" he asked.

The cook, being an upstanding man, with long experience among the woodsmen, and appreciating that it was a pivotal moment for his authority, unloosed a "haymaker" that ended on the jaw of the belligerent. There was no come-back. The tough had had enough.

The woods camp in recent years is a harmonious place.—N. Y. Times.

Fame and Fortune Weekly

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